Bamboo Comics

三国志

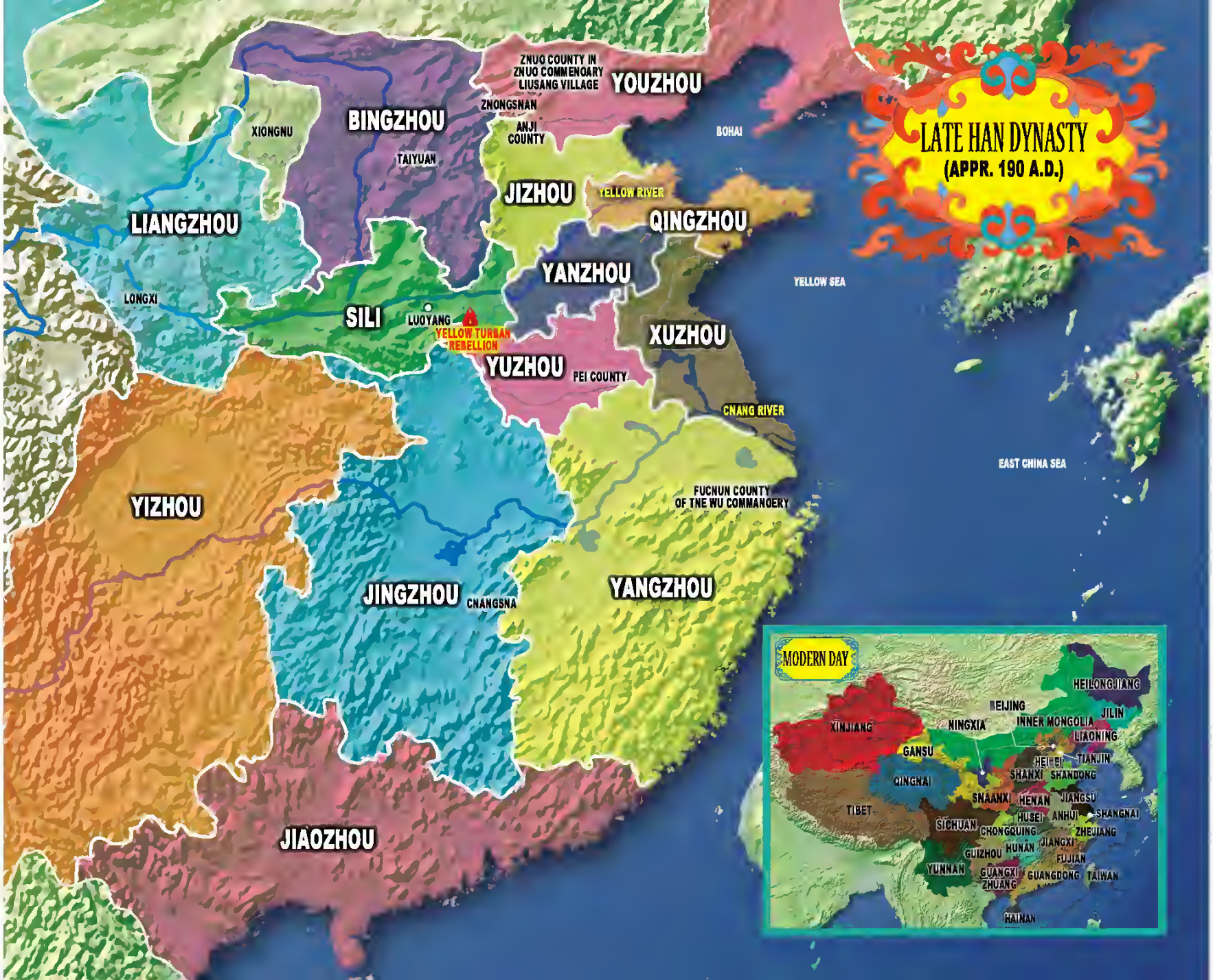
二

原作 北方謙三 Kitakata Kenzo

作画 河承男 Ha Seung Nam

陰謀の都

竹書房

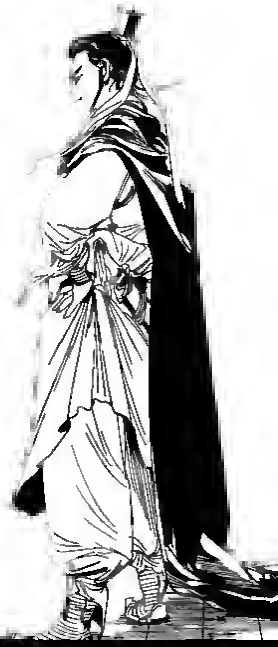

LATE HAN DYNASTY
(APPR. 190 A.D.)
ZNUO COUNTY IN
ZNUO COMMENDARY
LIUSANG VILLAGE
YOUZHOU
ZHONGSNAN
ANJI
COUNTY
BOHAI
BINGZHOU
XIONGNU
TAIYUAN
JIZHOU
YELLOW RIVER
QINGZHOU
LIANGZHOU
YANZHOU
YELLOW SEA
LONGXI
SILI
LUOYANG
YELLOW TURBAN
REBELLION
XUZHOU
YUZHOU
PEI COUNTY
CNANG RIVER
EAST CHINA SEA
YIZHOU
FUCNUN COUNTY
OF TNE WU COMMANGERY
JINGZHOU
CNANGSNA
YANGZHOU
JIAOZHOU
MODERN DAY
HEILONGJIANG
BEIJING
JILIN
XINJIANG
NINGXIA
INNER MONGOLIA
LIAONING
GANSU
HEBEI
TIANJIN
SHANXI
SHANDONG
QINGNAI
SNAANXI
HENAN
JIANGSU
TIBET
HUBEI
ANHUI
SHANGNAI
SICHUAN
CHONGQUING
ZHEJIANG
JIANGXI
GUIZHOU
HUNAN
FUJIAN
YUNNAN
GUANGXI
ZHUANG
GUANGDONG
TAIWAN
HAINAN

RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

2

原作 北方謙三 Kitakata Kenzo

作画 河承男 Ha Seung Nam



TAKESHOSO

RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

2

ZHU JUN

Style name: Gongwei. Date of birth unknown, died in 195. Hails from Shangyu County, Kuaiji Commandery, Yangzhou. During the suppression of the Yellow Turban Rebellion, he was appointed as an imperial commander, along with Huangfu Song, partaking in various battles and subjugating the insurgence. He also summoned forth Sun Jian, who also comes from the same Yangzhou region.

DONG ZHUO

Style name: Zhongying. Date of birth unknown, died in 192. Provincial governor of Western Liang, through suppressing the Yellow Turban Rebellion, he distinguished himself in battle, and was promoted to Inspector of Bingzhou. After Emperor Ling's death spurs on a fight over the right to succession, he's selected by the eunuchs to side with them and takes center stage.

JIAN SHUO

Date of birth unknown, died in 189. A eunuch of the Late Han Dynasty, he is a representative of the Regular Attendants (the highest position that governs those surrounding the emperor) and Ten Attendants (an organization of eunuchs that held considerable power during Emperor Ling's reign). He attempts to enthrone Emperor Ling's illegitimate son Xie.

YUAN SHAO

Style name: Benchu. Date of birth unknown, died in 202. He and his brother Yuan Shu come from a distinguished family that supplied the Three Ducal Ministers (Grand Commandant of the Military, Minister over the Masses, and Minister of Works) for four generations. He is known for hating eunuchs.

HE JIN

Style Name: Suigao. Date of birth unknown, died 189. His younger half-sister, Empress He, was the empress of Emperor Ling and gave birth to his youngest son. In this way, he secured his position as a maternal relative. In the feud over succession following Emperor Ling's death, he stood in opposition to the eunuchs.

YUAN SHU

Style name: Gongli. Date of birth unknown, died in 199. Son of Yuan Feng who was Minister of Works in the Late Han Dynasty. He is both Yuan Shao's younger cousin and half-brother. Later, he confiscates the royal seal that Sun Ce found and assumes the title of emperor.

XIAHOU YUAN

Style name: Miaocai. Date of birth unknown died in 219. Hails from Xiao County, Pei, Yuzhou. Xiahou Dun was his cousin. He served as an officer under Cao Cao from the time that he became Captain of the Cavalry.

LIU BEI

Style name: Xuande. Born 161, died 223. Hails from Liusang Village in Zhuo County, Zhuo Commandery, Youzhou. A descendant of Liu Sheng, Prince Jing of Zhongshan (son of the former Han emperor, Emperor Jing). He became a volunteer soldier to suppress the Yellow Turban Rebellion along with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei. Under Zhu Jun's direction, he also fights alongside Sun Jian and his men.

CAO CAO

Style name: Mengde. Born 155, died 220. He rose to the position of Captain of the Cavalry in the suppression the Yellow Turban Rebellion. He's eventually appointed as minister of Jinan. When the Imperial Court is overturned, he, along with Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu, attempts to bring the emperor under his control.

ZHANG FEI

Style name: Yunchang. Date of birth unknown, died in 219. In the trio of brothers consisting of himself, Liu Bei and Zhang Fei, he acts as the second oldest brother. He is sturdily built and fights with the Green Dragon Crescent Blade. He's a heroic man said to be equal to 10,000 soldiers on his own.

GUAN YU

Style name: Yunchang. Date of birth unknown, died in 219. In the trio of brothers consisting of himself, Liu Bei and Zhang Fei, he acts as the second oldest and fights with the Green Dragon Crescent Blade. He's a heroic man said to be equal to 10,000 soldiers on his own.

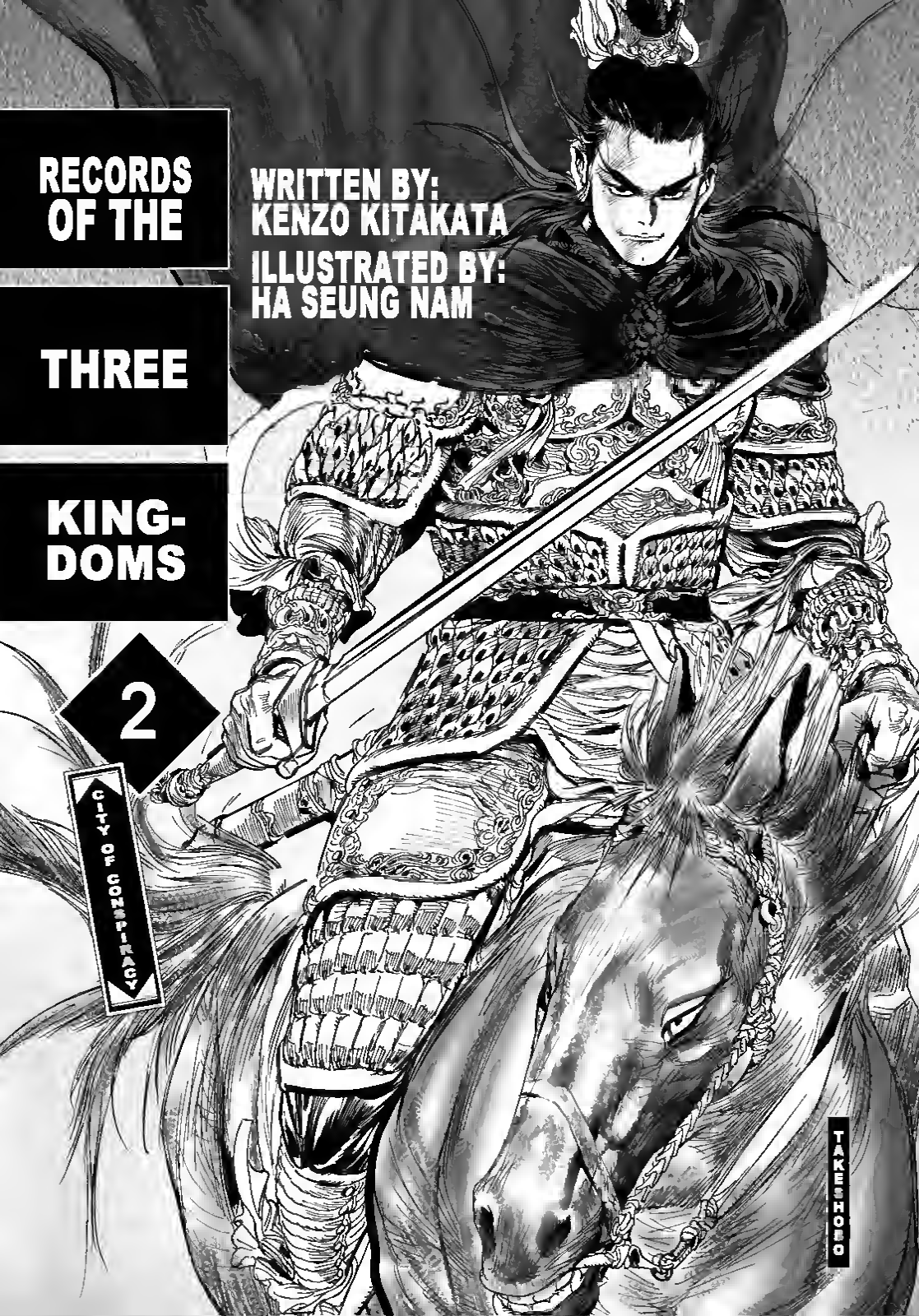
SUN JIAN

Style name: Wentai. Born 155, died 192. He made a name for himself as a pirate-eradicator in his teens and his military successes at quelling the Yellow Turban Rebellion quickly made him viceroy of Changsha and provincial governor of Yuzhou in a flash.

RECORDS OF THE THREE KING-DOMS

WRITTEN BY:
KENZO KITAKATA

ILLUSTRATED BY:
HA SEUNG NAM



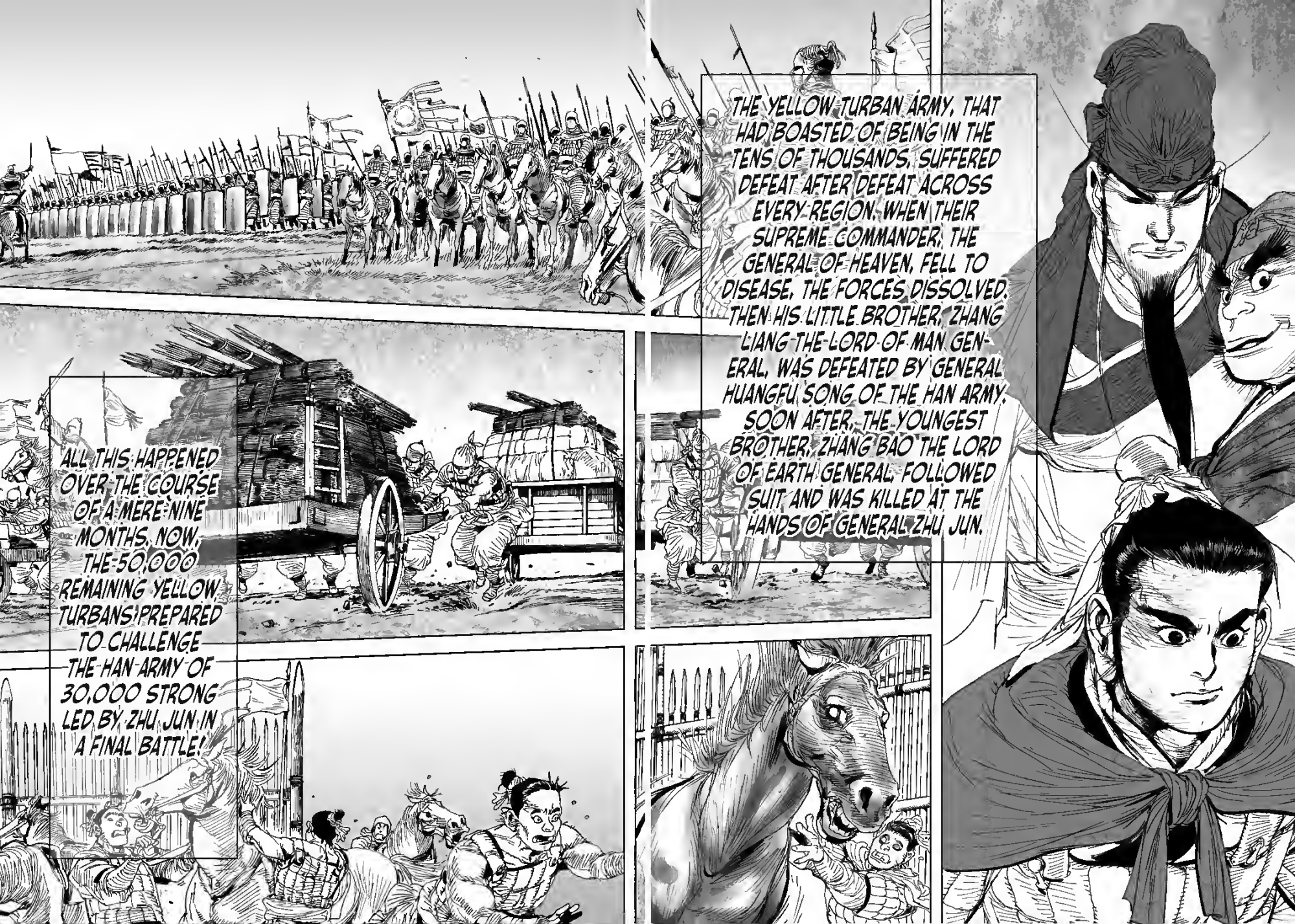
2

CITY OF CONSPIRACY

TAKESHOBO

Flags HAN

IN AUTUMN OF THE FOUNDING YEAR OF ZHONGPING (184), THOUGH THE HAN DYNASTY WAS WEAKER, ITS ARMY WAS AS VIGOROUS AS EVER.


THE YELLOW TURBAN ARMY, THAT HAD BOASTED OF BEING IN THE TENS OF THOUSANDS, SUFFERED DEFEAT AFTER DEFEAT ACROSS EVERY REGION. WHEN THEIR SUPREME COMMANDER, THE GENERAL OF HEAVEN, FELL TO DISEASE, THE FORCES DISSOLVED. THEN HIS LITTLE BROTHER, ZHANG LIANG THE LORD OF MAN GENERAL, WAS DEFEATED BY GENERAL HUANGFU SONG OF THE HAN ARMY. SOON AFTER, THE YOUNGEST BROTHER, ZHANG BAO THE LORD OF EARTH GENERAL, FOLLOWED SUIT AND WAS KILLED AT THE HANDS OF GENERAL ZHU JUN.
ALL THIS HAPPENED OVER THE COURSE OF A MERE NINE MONTHS. NOW, THE 50,000 REMAINING YELLOW TURBANS PREPARED TO CHALLENGE THE HAN ARMY OF 30,000 STRONG LED BY ZHU JUN IN A FINAL BATTLE!

GENERAL ZHU JUN!
ドドドド
THUD
THUD
THUD
GENERAL!
WHAT'S ALL THE ALARM ABOUT?
WHAT IS IT?
A FILTHY BAND OF MEN HAS COME UNINVITED SAYING THEY WISH TO GIVE US ASSISTANCE!
Y-YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT!

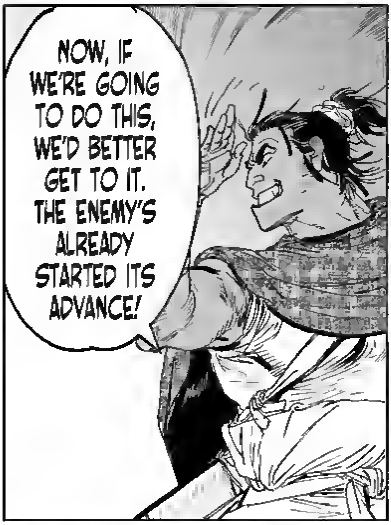
WHY IF IT ISN'T SIR SUN JIAN! YOU FINALLY MADE IT!
I'VE BEEN WAITING HALF A YEAR SINCE I GOT YOUR LETTER!
I KNOW. I'M RELIEVED TO FINALLY BE HERE. FOR THE ENTIRE JOURNEY, I WAS WORRIED THAT THE WAR WOULD HAVE ALREADY ENDED WITHOUT US.

HA HA HA HA!
BY THE WAY, CAN I REALLY FIGHT FOR YOU?
DON'T WORRY.
SEE THOSE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS? THERE'S 50,000 OF THEM LEFT, BUT ONCE WE'VE CRUSHED THEM, THIS REVOLT WILL BE OVER.
SO THERE'S STILL A JOB FOR ME TO DO!

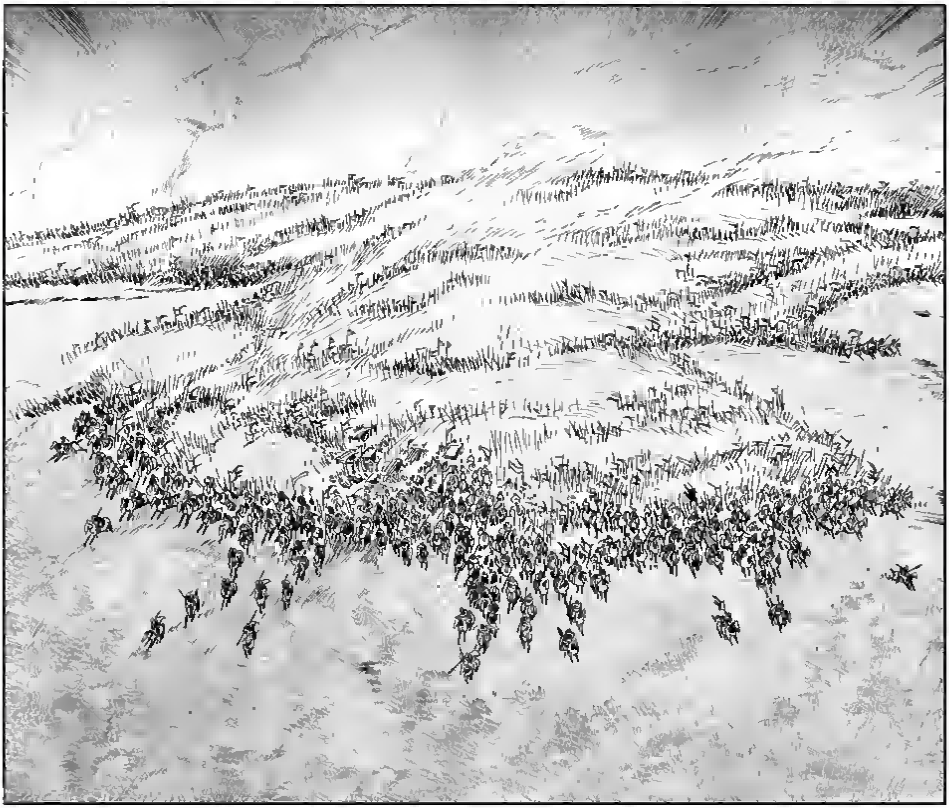
TCH, WHAT A COCKY JERK!
GOING ON ABOUT MAKING IT IN TIME FOR THE WAR. ANYBODY CAN SEE THIS BATTLEFIELD'S STILL IN THE THICK OF THE FIGHT.
AND SO WHAT IF HE'S BROUGHT 3000 MEN? AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, 1500 WOULD DO.
ENOUGH, ZHANG FEI. HE'LL HEAR YOU!
BUT BROTHER, IT'S TRUE!
THE GUYS FROM WU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COCKY. BUT THIS ONE TAKES THE CAKE!

HA HA HA! WELL, SIR SUN JIAN, I KNOW YOU ONLY JUST GOT HERE, BUT...
...I'LL HAVE YOU JOIN THE LEFT FLANK DIRECTED BY THIS HERE SIR LIU BEI.
I AM LIU BEI XUANDE FROM ZHUO COUNTY. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU.

SO YOU'RE FROM ZHUO, ARE YOU?
THAT TELLS ME YOU'RE NOT A SOLDIER OF THE HAN ARMY.
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR SUN JIAN. SIR LIU BEI IS LIKE YOU AND CAME ALL THE WAY FROM ZHUO COUNTY TO JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER ARMY AS A COMMANDING OFFICER.
I HOPE THAT DOESN'T AFFECT YOUR OPINION OF FIGHTING ALONGSIDE HIM, SIR SUN JIAN.


NOW, IF WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS, WE'D BETTER GET TO IT. THE ENEMY'S ALREADY STARTED ITS ADVANCE!

NOT AT ALL! I WOULD NEVER CHALLENGE YOUR DECISION, LORD ZHU JUN.



ゴーオオー
RRRRRMBLE
THE FIRST BLOW WILL DECIDE THE VICTORY!
ALL RIGHT, MEN! LISTEN UP! THE ENEMY MAY OUTNUMBER US, BUT REMEMBER THEY'RE JUST STRAGGLERS!
I WANT THE WHOLE ARMY TO FORM A CIRCLE FROM THEIR DESIGNATED POSITIONS AND CHARGE!!

オオオ
OOOOOOH!!
ウオオ
WOOOOOOOOAH!!

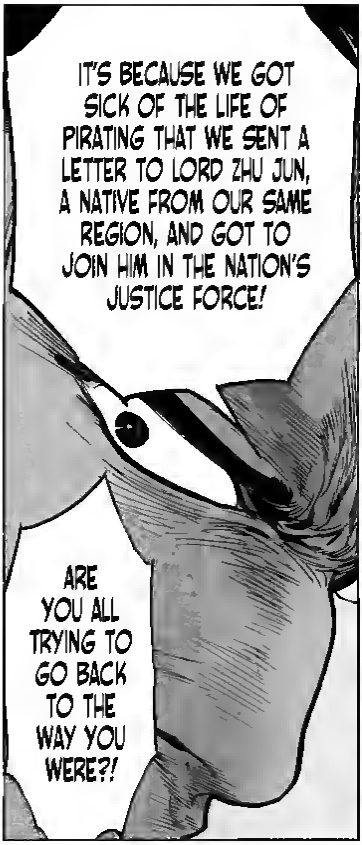
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR ARMOR?
WE'RE NOT EXACTLY THE PRETTIEST THING TO LOOK AT, BUT YOU AND YOUR GANG FROM WU LOOK LIKE SHIT!
WELL WELL, LORD SUN JIAN.

HA HA HA HA!
ZHANG FEI, DON'T BE SO RUDE.
I SEE!
I DON'T CARE!
WE FROM WU MAKE A LIVING AS PIRATES. WE STEAL OUR ARMOR FROM THE ENEMIES WE KILL!

I COULDN'T HELP NOTICING YOUR MEN'S WEAPONS BEFORE.
THEN THAT EXPLAINS IT.
THOSE LONG CORDS WITH IRON HOOKED CLAW-LIKE ANCHORS ATTACHED TO THE END OF THEM... I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER WHAT THEY WERE FOR.
YOU GOT IT.

THOSE IRON HOOKED CLAWS ARE THE TOOLS WE USE TO SEIZE MERCHANT SHIPS ON THE CHANGJIANG (ANOTHER NAME FOR THE YANGZI RIVER).
WHEN WE HOOK THEM ONTO THE BOWS OF THE SHIPS, WE CAN PUSH AND PULL EVEN THE BIGGEST SHIPS AROUND!

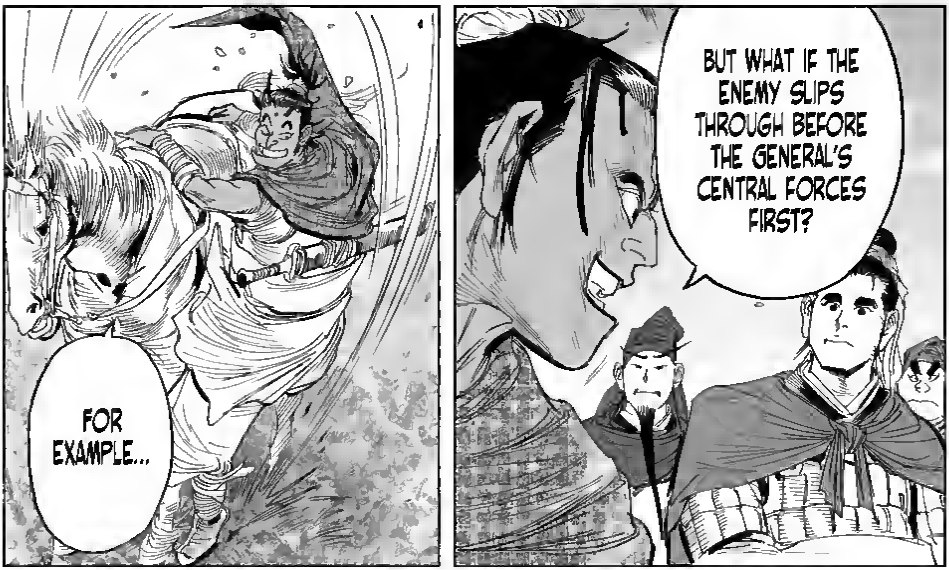
SO IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, WE'RE FIGHTING ALONGSIDE BUCCANEERS!
HA HA HA HA!
WHAT DID YOU SAY, YOU BASTARD ?!
ZHANG FEI!


IT'S BECAUSE WE GOT SICK OF THE LIFE OF PIRATING THAT WE SENT A LETTER TO LORD ZHU JUN, A NATIVE FROM OUR SAME REGION, AND GOT TO JOIN HIM IN THE NATION'S JUSTICE FORCE!
ARE YOU ALL TRYING TO GO BACK TO THE WAY YOU WERE?!

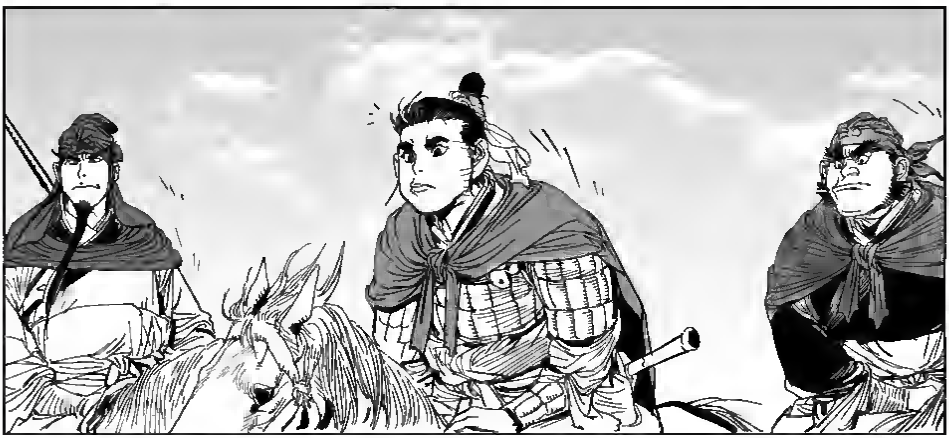
KNOCK IT OFF, YOU IMBECILES!

.....
.....
THAT REMINDS ME, SIR LIU BEI.
I WAS GIVEN THE ORDER TO FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS AS MY GENERAL, BUT JUST WHAT STRATEGY DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR US, SIR LIU BEI?

I SEE!
I HAVE IN MIND FOR OUR LEFT FLANK TO LAUNCH OUR ATTACK AT THE SAME TIME THAT GENERAL ZHU JUN'S CENTRAL FORCES COMMENCE THEIR CHARGE.


FOR EXAMPLE...
BUT WHAT IF THE ENEMY SLIPS THROUGH BEFORE THE GENERAL'S CENTRAL FORCES FIRST?

RIGHT NOW, THE ENEMY IS IN A CIRCULAR FORMATION.
SO WHAT IF...



IT'S RUDE TO REMAIN ON HORSE-BACK...
...WHILE I'M DOWN IN THE DIRT EXPLAINING THIS TO YOU.
YOU GUYS DISMOUNT TOO AND LISTEN TO WHAT SIR SUN JIAN HAS TO SAY!
AH! FORGIVE MY THOUGHT-LESSNESS.

FIGHTING ON LAND IS NO DIFFERENT THAN ON SEA!
COME, PIRATES OF THE CHANGJIANG!
LET'S GET FIRED UP!!

ウオオオオオ
WOOOAH!
ドドド

HA HA HA HA!
SIR SUN JIAN, YOU TRICKED US!
YOU'RE THE ONES WHO SAID THE PEOPLE OF WU ARE EVIL BY NATURE.
YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT SOMETIMES DOUBLE CROSSING YOUR ALLY IS ALSO A MILITARY STRATEGY!

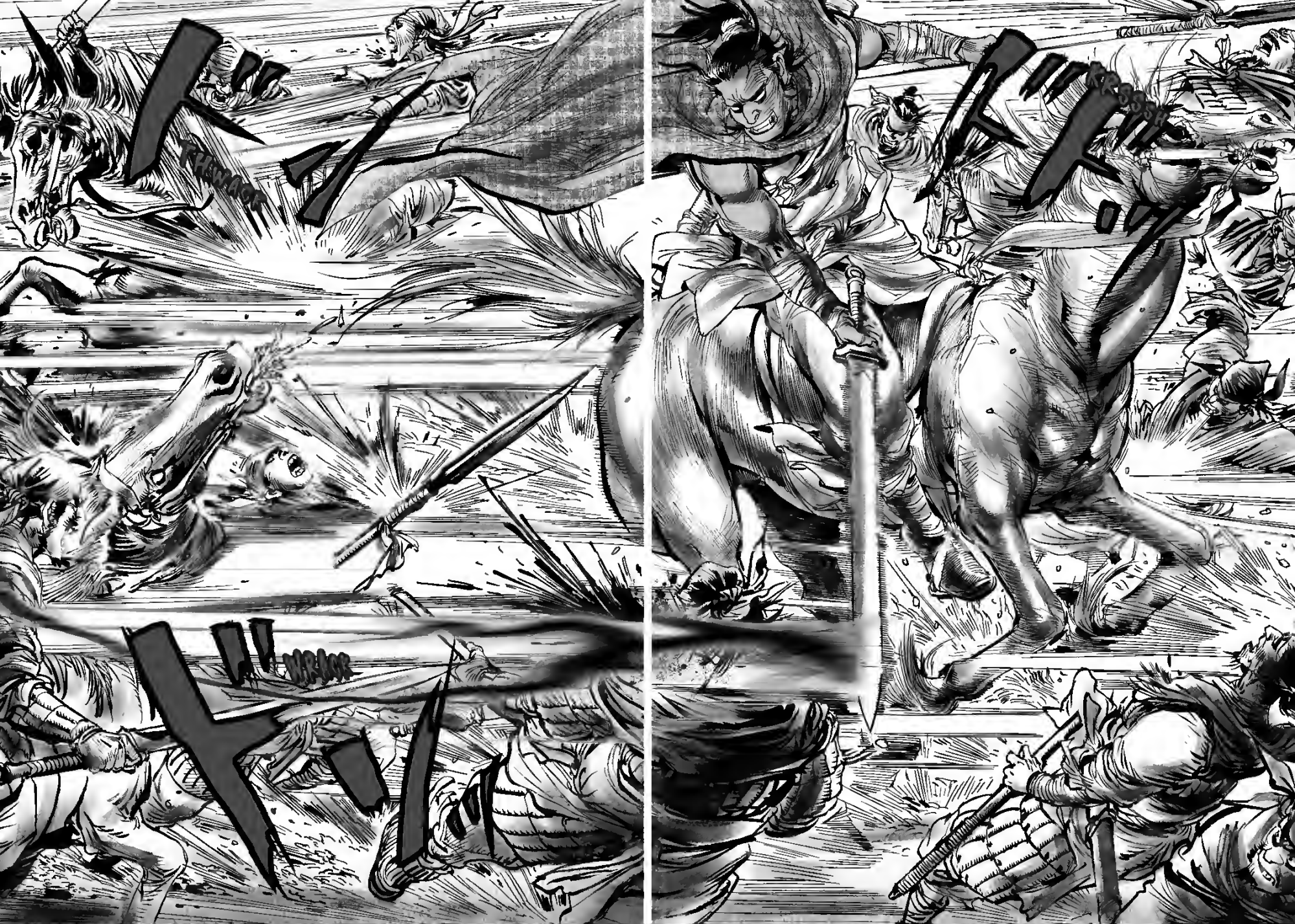
ドドド...
NEEEEIGH!
THUD
ヒヒン!
THUD
THUD
I'M NOT ABOUT TO LOSE TO HIM!
DAMN IT!

RRRRUMBLE
AFTER THEM!
HURRY!
THUD THUD THUD

わアアア…
WAAAAH!
ウオオオ…
WOOOOH…
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD

HERE COMES SUN JIAN WENTAI!
MASTER OF FUCHUN IN THE WU COMMANDERY (PRESENT DAY HANGZHOU)!

SLASH
BAM
SLASH
SLASH
GAH
GAH
GAH


THWACK
KRSSSH

!
ドドド
THUD
THUD
THUD

WHY AREN'T YOU FIGHTING?
ZHANG! ZHANG FEI, WHAT IS IT?
THOSE PIRATES ARE WICKED STRONG!
SO STRONG...

FOOL!
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE IN AWE-STRUCK!
I COMPLETELY FORGOT!
RIGHT!
LET'S SHOW THEM OUR MILITARY PROWESS!
ドガガガ
THUD
THUD

THEN WATCH THIS!
MY SNAKE LANCE IS NOTHING TO SCOFF AT!
RAAAWR

WHOOOOOSH
THUD
THUD
THUD

……
剣

PRETTY DISGRACEFUL, ISN'T IT?

BUT DON'T LOOK AT WHAT THEY DO WITH SNEERS ON YOUR FACES.
WE'RE JUST LIKE YOU. TRYING TO MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THESE CHAOTIC TIMES!

INDEED!
BUT OUR GOAL IS THE STABILITY OF THE HAN DYNASTY. NOT PLUNDERING!

THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING. NO REWARD CAN COMPENSATE FOR CUTTING A HUNDRED MEN DOWN TO TWENTY!
I'VE JUST BEEN APPOINTED AS VICEROY OF CHANGSHA!
VICEROY IS THE HIGHEST POSITION OF A COMMANDERY AND GIVES ME MY OWN ARMY.

AND AS FOR YOU...
AREN'T YOU PRECINCT CHIEFS* OF ZHONGSHAN'S ANJI COUNTY?
HOW ABOUT IT? SERVE UNDER LORD SUN JIAN.
WE'LL MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE!

* Commandants of the military affairs

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PIRATE SCUM TALKING ABOUT?!
THIS HERE LORD LIU BEI XUANDE IS A DESCENDENT OF PRINCE JING OF ZHONGSHAN!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
YOU GUYS SHOULD SERVE UNDER LORD LIU BEI INSTEAD!

YOU DIRTY BASTARD!
YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?!
SIR SUN JIAN.
I APPRECIATE YOUR KIND OFFER.

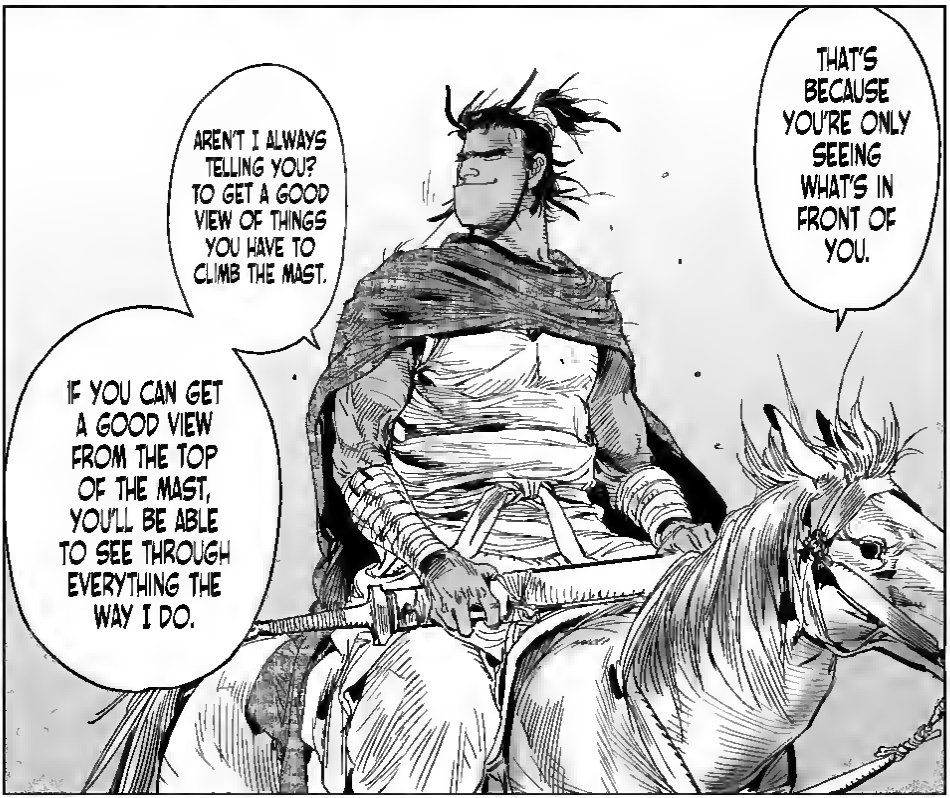
BUT OUR POST AS PRECINCT CHIEFS IS A DIRECT ORDER FROM THE EMPEROR.
IF YOU'LL NOW EXCUSE US.
PARDON US.
.....
WHOOSH
CLIP CLOP

CLIP CLOP
CLIP CLOP
CLIP CLOP
WE'LL MEET AGAIN, YOU DIRTY PIRATES.
.....

TCH! LOUSY ZHUO SCUM!
WE MAY BE PIRATES, BUT YOU'RE JUST DUMB HORSE DRIVERS!
AND HOW ARE SOME PATHETIC HORSE DRIVERS SUPPOSED TO FIX THE DYNASTY?!
WRONG!

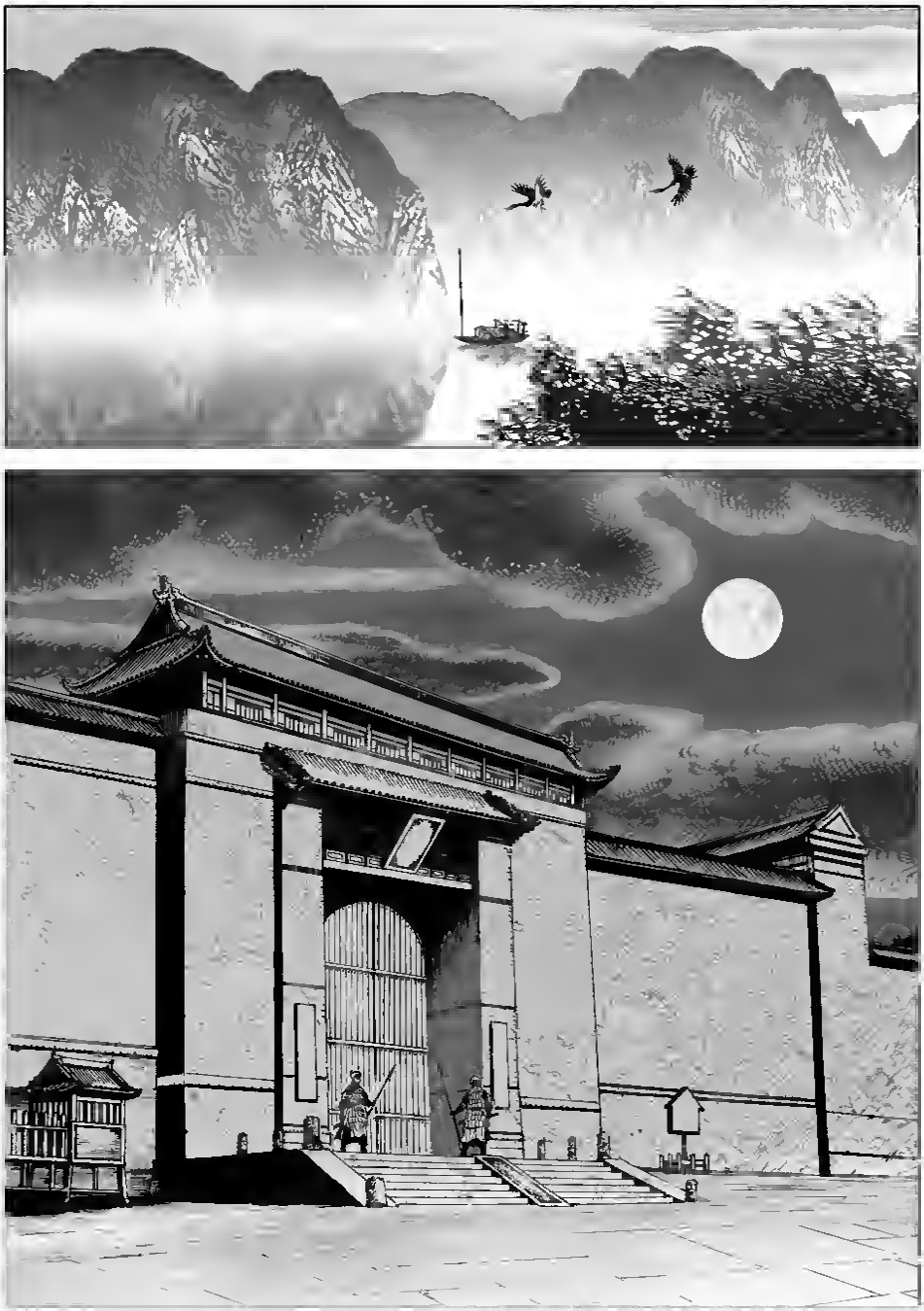
THAT'S NOT HOW IT IS! THOSE GUYS MIGHT SURPRISE US AS POWERFUL ENEMIES!
RIGHT NOW, THERE'S A MAN NAMED CAO CAO WHO IS THE CAPTAIN OF THE CAVALRY FOR THE HAN ARMY. HE'S MOST LIKELY TO GET IN THE WAY OF MY PLANS FOR TAKEOVER.
THAT LIU BEI GUY IS QUITE A CHARACTER!

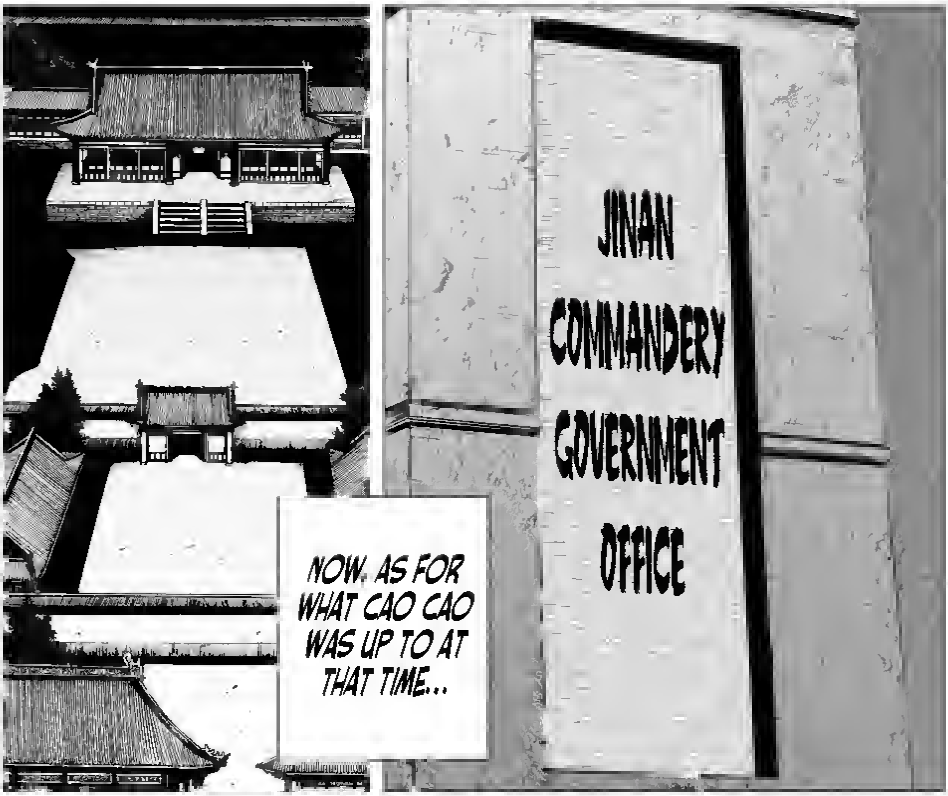
HA HA HA HA!
IS THAT SO? THEY LOOKED TO ME LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN COUNTRY ROUGHNECKS WEARING ARMOR.

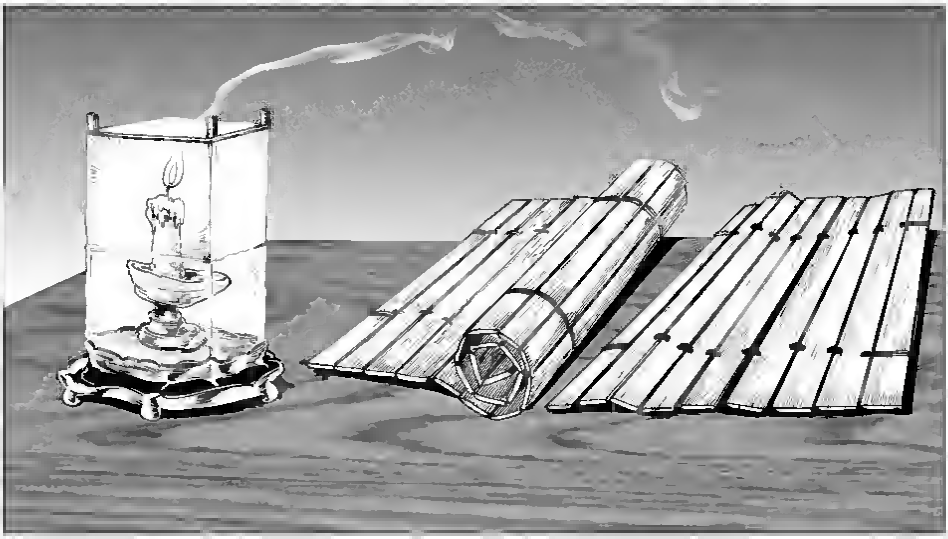

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE ONLY SEEING WHAT'S IN FRONT OF YOU.
AREN'T I ALWAYS TELLING YOU? TO GET A GOOD VIEW OF THINGS YOU HAVE TO CLIMB THE MAST.
IF YOU CAN GET A GOOD VIEW FROM THE TOP OF THE MAST, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE THROUGH EVERYTHING THE WAY I DO.

THE GREAT HERO OF A MAN, SUN JIAN WENTAI FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS!

THE REASON WHY A PIRATE LIKE SUN JIAN ABANDONED THE SEA TO COME ONTO DRY LAND WAS BECAUSE RATHER THAN ALWAYS WAITING ON THE HIGH SEA, NEVER KNOWING WHEN PREY WOULD COME YOUR WAY, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MORE EFFICIENT TO CONTROL THE YANGZHOU TERRITORIES, THE SITE OF WU. AND SO WITH CUNNING SWIFTNESS, SUN JIAN APPLIED HIMSELF TO TAKING OVER.
IN 155 A.D., HE WAS THIRTY YEARS OLD, BORN IN WU COMMANDERY, JIANGNAN DISTRICT, CHINA. STRANGELY ENOUGH, HE WAS BORN THE SAME YEAR AS CAO CAO. BUT UNLIKE CAO CAO AND HIS SPARKLING PEDIGREE, HE MADE HIS LIVING AS A PIRATE WHO, PLAGUING EVERYWHERE FROM CHANGJIANG TO THE YELLOW SEA BASIN.




JINAN COMMANDERY GOVERNMENT OFFICE
NOW, AS FOR WHAT CAO CAO WAS UP TO AT THAT TIME...



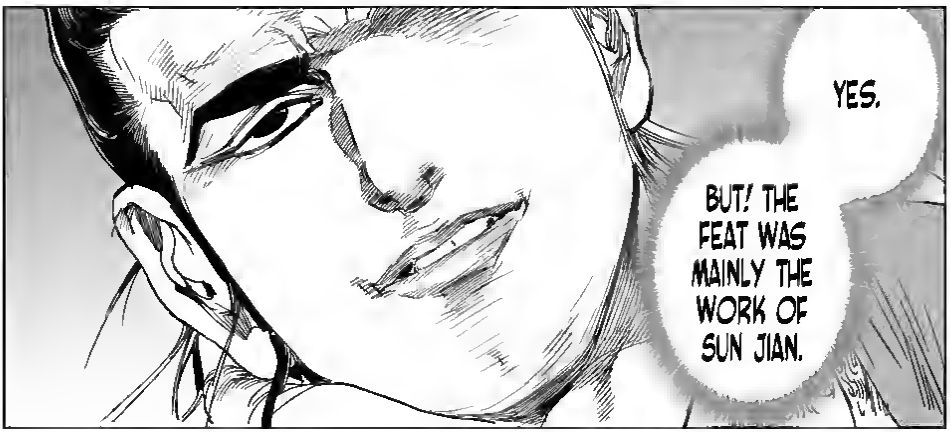
HIS SUCCESSES WITH SUBJUGATING THE YELLOW TURBAN ARMY EARLIER HAD GRANTED CAO CAO THE POSITION OF MINISTER OF JINAN COMMANDERY, THE DEPUTY OFFICIAL OF THE REGION.

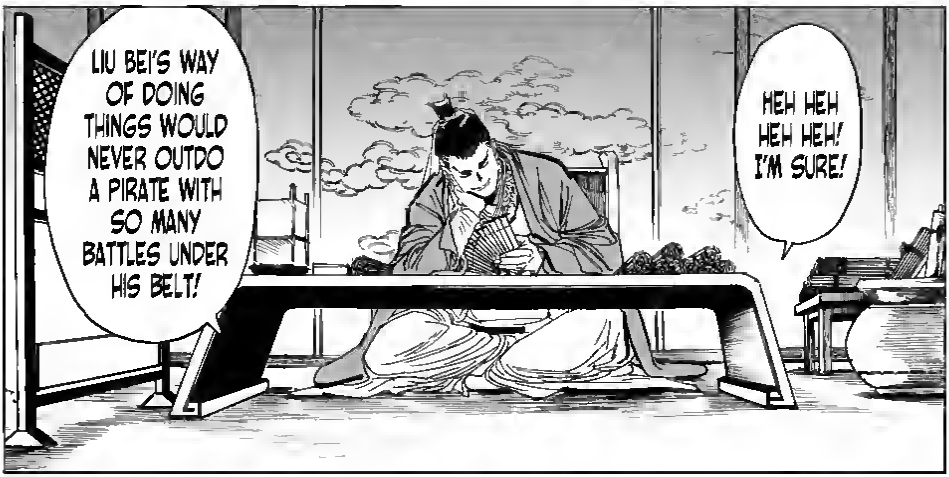
IN HIS NEW POSITION, CAO CAO MAY HAVE BEEN PLACED FAR AWAY FROM THE CAPITAL, BUT THAT DIDN'T MISS A BEAT AND WORKED INTENTLY ON HIS DUTY AT OUSTING CORRUPTED OFFICIALS AND SUCH.
AND THEN...

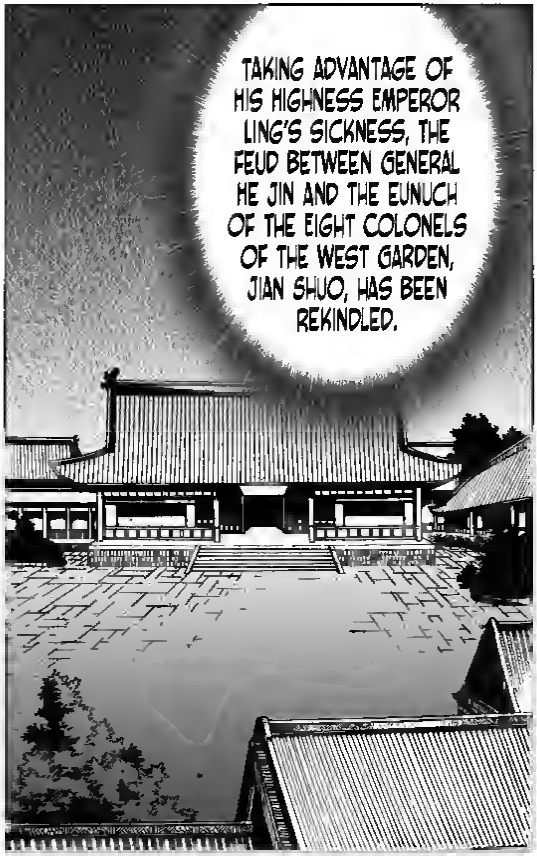
* A spy of the times

HOW IS THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION GOING?
CLACK
WHO FINISHED THEM OFF?
GENERAL ZHU JUN'S ARMY AND THE VOLUNTEER ARMY OF SUN JIAN AND LIU BEI!
IT HAS BEEN CRUSHED!

WELL, WELL.
LIU YOU SAY?

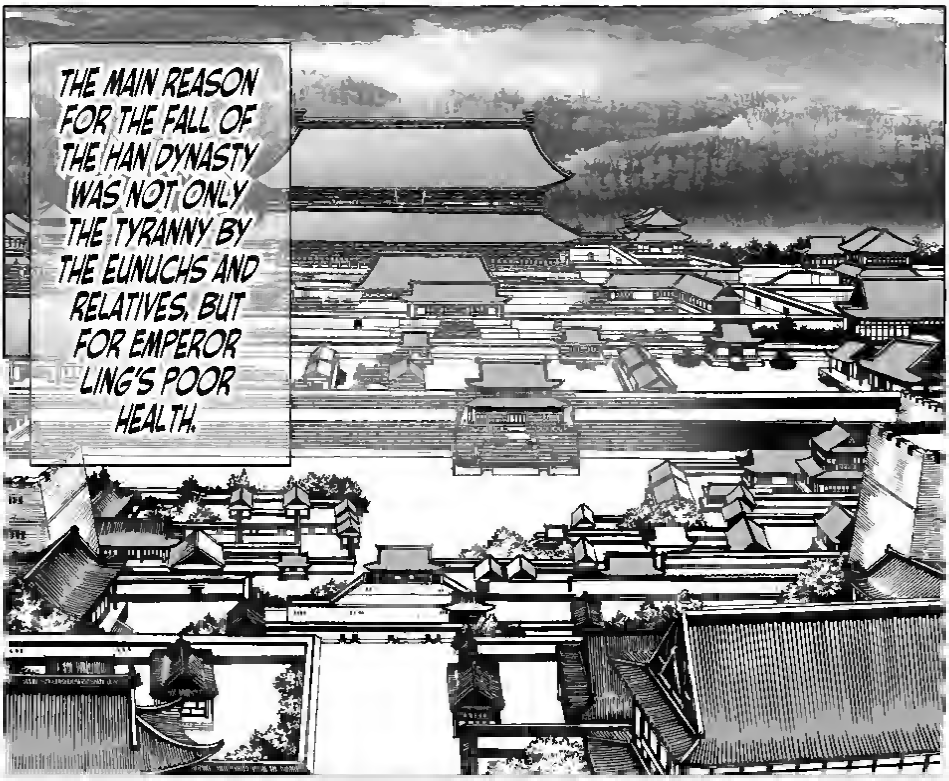

YES.
BUT! THE FEAT WAS MAINLY THE WORK OF SUN JIAN.


LIU BEI'S WAY OF DOING THINGS WOULD NEVER OUTDO A PIRATE WITH SO MANY BATTLES UNDER HIS BELT!
HEH HEH HEH HEH! I'M SURE!

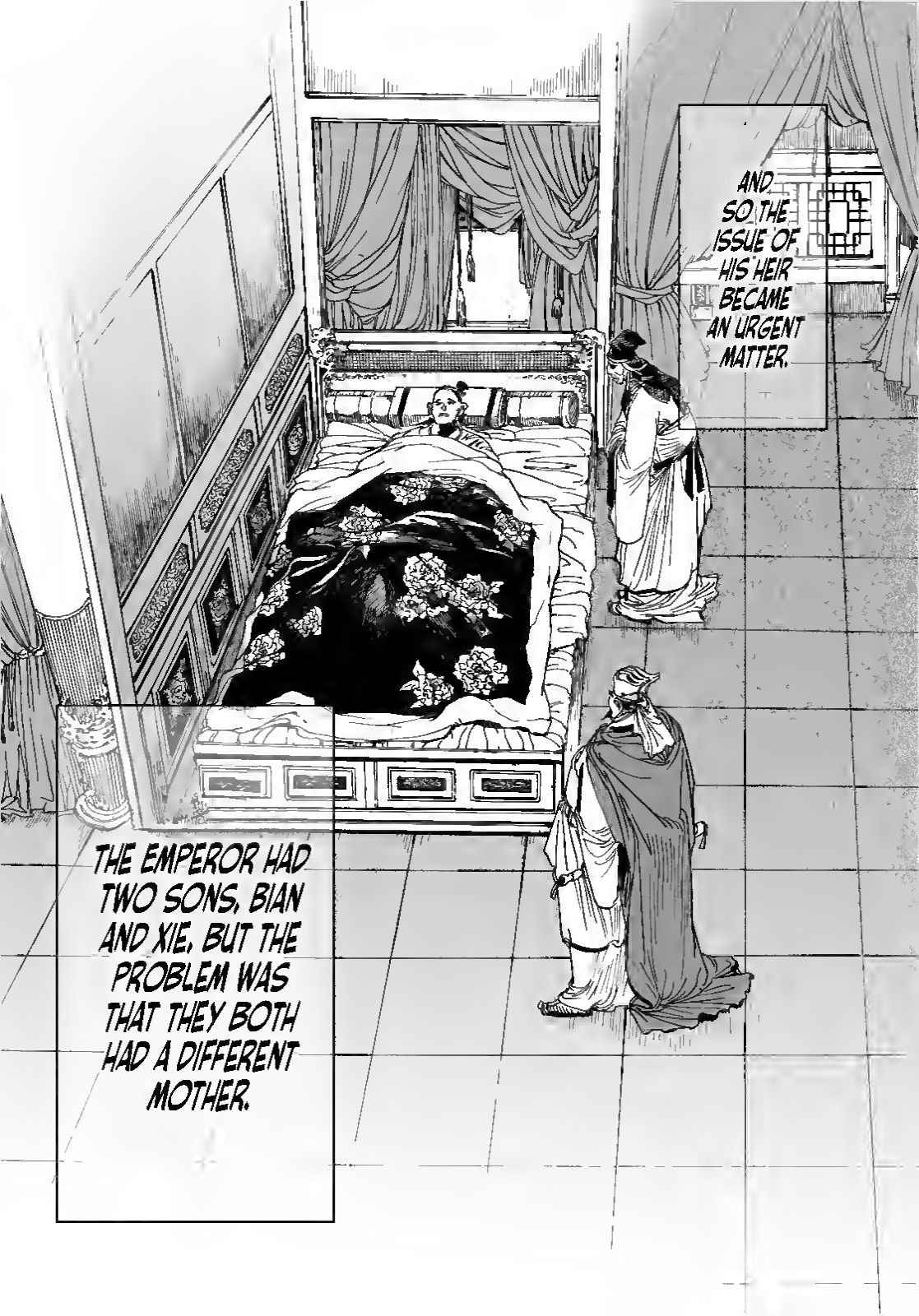

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS HIGHNESS EMPEROR LING'S SICKNESS, THE FEUD BETWEEN GENERAL HE JIN AND THE EUNUCH OF THE EIGHT COLONELS OF THE WEST GARDEN, JIAN SHUO, HAS BEEN REKINDLED.

SO.
HOW IS LUOYANG?

I KNEW IT.
...ONCE IT ENDED, HE STARTED UP AGAIN...
HE WAS STAYING QUITE DURING THE BEDLAM OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION, BUT...

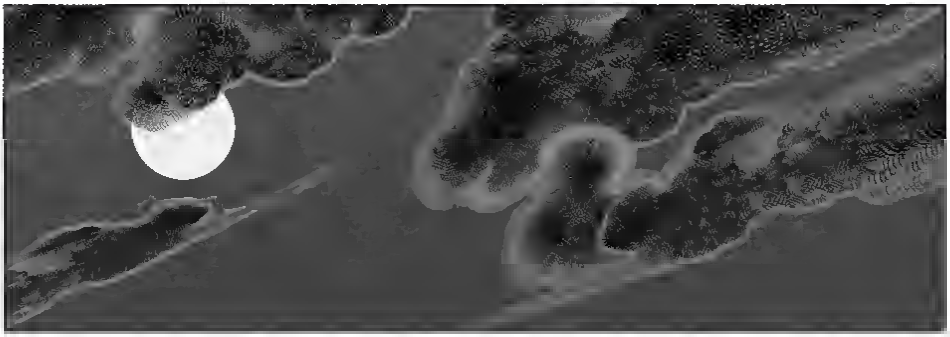

THE MAIN REASON FOR THE FALL OF THE HAN DYNASTY WAS NOT ONLY THE TYRANNY BY THE EUNUCHS AND RELATIVES, BUT FOR EMPEROR LING'S POOR HEALTH.

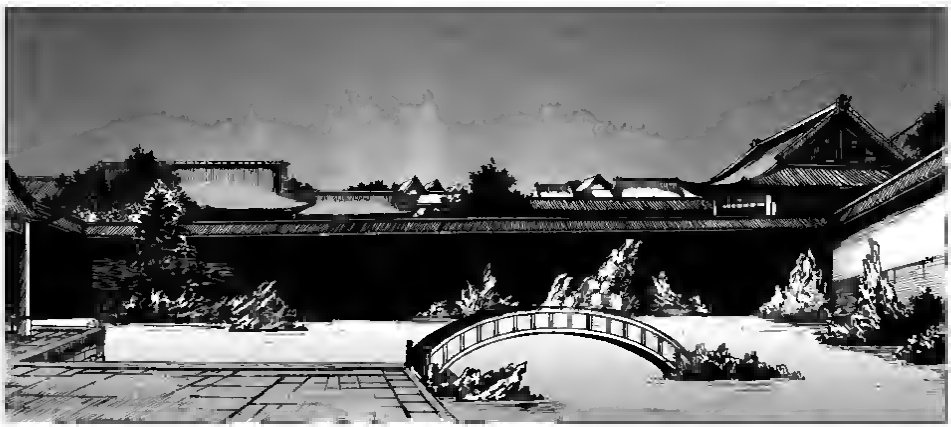
THE TOP-RANKING IMPERIAL COURT EUNUCH, JIAN SHAO.
GENERAL HE JIN SUIGAO.
THE ILLNESS OF THE 34-YEAR-OLD EMPEROR WAS WHAT WE NOW CALL CIRRHOSIS OF THE LIVER. HIS CONDITION WOULD SUDDENLY IMPROVE ONLY FOR IT TO QUICKLY BECOME CRITICAL THE NEXT DAY, REMAINING CONSTANTLY UNSTABLE.

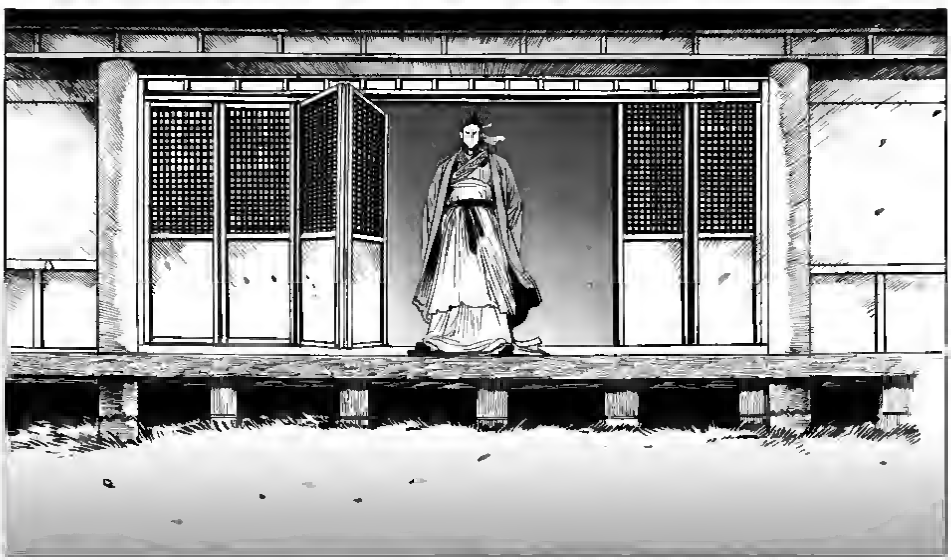

AND SO THE ISSUE OF HIS HEIR BECAME AN URGENT MATTER.
THE EMPEROR HAD TWO SONS, BIAN AND XIE, BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THEY BOTH HAD A DIFFERENT MOTHER.

THE EMPEROR'S SON, BIAN, WAS BORN OF A BEAUTIFUL CONCUBINE TO WHOM THE EMPEROR WAS PARTIAL, GIVING HER GREAT FREEDOM. SHE WAS ORIGINALLY THE DAUGHTER OF A BUTCHER IN LUOYANG, SO THIS NEWFOUND POWER CATAPULTED HER EQUALLY LOWLY BROTHER, HE JIN THE HOG TRADER, TO THE POSITION OF HIGHEST GENERAL IN THE HAN ARMY.

THE OTHER PRINCE WAS XIE, BORN TO CONSORT WANG, ONE OF THE EMPEROR'S LOVERS. XIE HAD BACKING FROM THE EMPEROR'S MOTHER, EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG, AND TOGETHER WITH THE EUNUCH JIAN SHUO, SHE SCHEMED TO MAKE HIM THE THIRTEENTH EMPEROR.







FOR THESE REASONS, THE COURT IS ON THE VERGE OF ERUPTING.

WHAT WILL YOUR NEXT MOVE BE, LORD CAO CAO?

A GOOD QUESTION.
WHAT SHALL I DO INDEED...
IF THERE IS A COUP D'ETAT, WHICH SIDE WILL YOU TAKE, LORD CAO CAO?

...THEN IT MEANS THE COURT IS ALREADY DIVIDED IN HALF.
IF YOU'RE ASKING ME THAT...
IS THAT SO?
YES!
FROM THE COOKS TO THE WATER DRAWERS, EVERYONE HAS MADE WHERE THEY STAND CLEAR.

I CHOSE WELL MAKING YOU MY SPY.
THAT'S GOOD NEWS FOR ME.
JINGLE
THERE'S DOUBLE YOUR USUAL AMOUNT IN THERE, SO HAVE A DRINK WITH YOUR FRIENDS ON ME!
YOUR REWARD.

CATCH
HA
SSHHH

IS ANY-BODY THERE?
OH, XIA-HOU YUAN! YOU'RE STILL UP.
I WILL NOT LIE ON THE JOB WHILE YOU'RE STILL AWAKE, LORD CAO CAO.
YOU CALLED?

AT THIS HOUR OF NIGHT?
THEN DISPATCH A MESSENGER TO LUOYANG FOR ME AT ONCE!
I SEE.
BEING VICEROY OF YANZHOU WOULD BE A GRAND PROMOTION! YOU WOULD TURN DOWN SUCH AN OFFER?
BUT WHY?!
I AM GOING TO TURN DOWN THAT OFFER SENT TO ME THE OTHER DAY FOR A NEW POSITION AS VICEROY OF YANZHOU WITH THE EXCUSE OF ILLNESS.
YES.

IT'S JUST A BRIBE TO TRY TO WIN ME OVER TO HIS SIDE.
AND I'M NOT TAKING IT!
THAT'S RIGHT. THAT ORDER CAME DIRECTLY FROM GENERAL HE JIN.
RENOUNCE ALL OF MY DUTIES AND RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN!
THEN WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO INSTEAD?
I SEE.

TH-THEN HOW WILL YOU EVER KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES?!
WHAT?!
I'LL BE FINE.
EVEN IF I DO NOTHING, THE TIMES WILL INEVITABLY NEED ME.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT NOW IS TO NOT LABEL MYSELF A SUPPORTER OF ONE SIDE OR ANOTHER.
THINK ABOUT IT.
IF I WERE TO SIDE WITH ONE CAMP, AND IT WERE TO FAIL, WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE ME? EVERYTHING WOULD END IN THAT INSTANT. AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO TAKE SUCH A DANGEROUS RISK!

AS WAS CAO CAO'S STYLE, HE DID NOT SIMPLY RESIGN, BUT READIED A SAFETY VALVE FOR HIMSELF IN THE FORM OF TWO LETTERS HE SENT OUT AHEAD OF TIME TO THE CAPITAL.
IN LESS THAN TEN DAYS, CAO CAO REMOVED HIMSELF FROM HIS POSITION, AND RETURN TO HIS BIRTHPLACE OF XIAO COUNTY, JOBLESS.

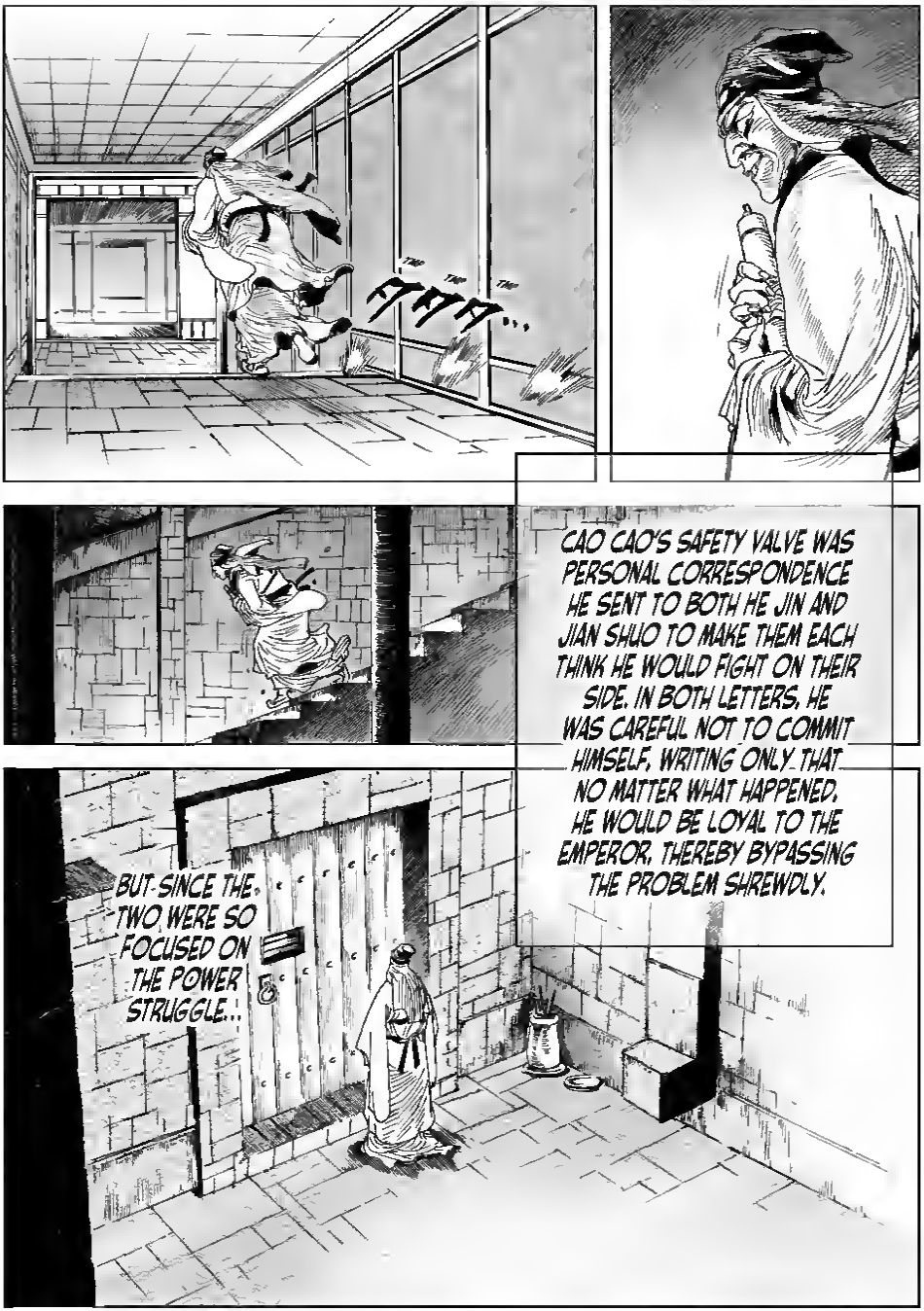
CAO CAO SAYS HE'S COMING!
CAO CAO MAY BE NOTHING MORE THAN CAPTAIN OF THE CAVALRY, BUT THE ARMY HE LEADS IS STRONG!
THIS IS MOST ENCOURAGING.
HE WRITES THAT THOUGH HIS ILLNESS IS SO SERIOUS THAT HE CANNOT LEND US ANY STRENGTH RIGHT NOW, IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO THE EMPEROR, HE WILL RALLY TO OUR SIDE.

THAT'S RIGHT. THAT'S WHY I HAD MY EYE ON CAO CAO FROM THE START!
THIS IS UNPRECEDENTED, BUT SUMMON THE SHRINE MAIDEN AND HAVE HER PRAY FOR HIS QUICK RECOVERY!
YES, SIR!
WE'LL PREPARE IT AT ONCE!

WHO IS SHE PRAYING FOR?
LORD HE JIN IS PRAYING FOR A SICK SUB-ORDINATE'S RECOVERY.

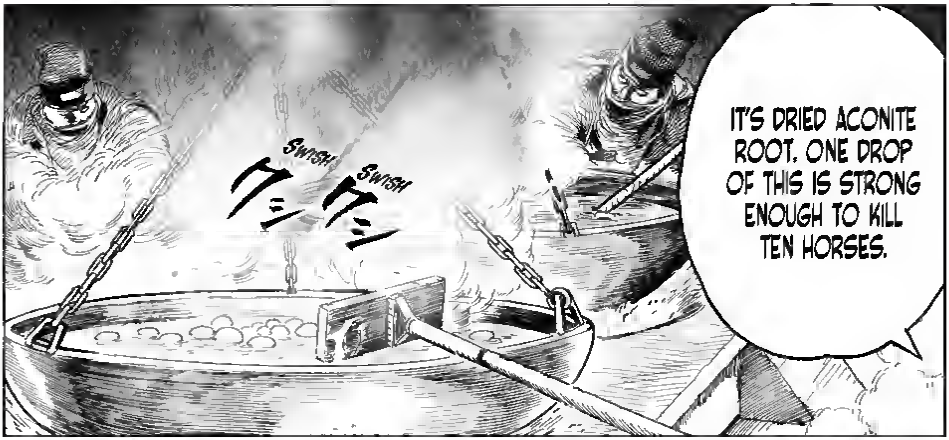
WHICH SUBORDI-NATE?
A LORD CAO CAO MENGDE, CAPTAIN OF THE CAVALRY.
Y-YES.
DOES THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
WHAT?!
CAO CAO?!
N-NO. NEVER MIND.
I'LL HANDLE IT FROM HERE. YOU GO ON AHEAD.

CURSE YOU HE JIN...
HEH HEH HEH!
THINK WHAT YOU LIKE, CAO CAO IS ON OUR SIDE!
HE ALREADY WROTE TO ME THAT IN AN EMERGENCY, HE'LL RUSH TO THE EMPEROR'S SIDE.


TAP TAP TAP...
CAO CAO'S SAFETY VALVE WAS PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE HE SENT TO BOTH HE JIN AND JIAN SHUO TO MAKE THEM EACH THINK HE WOULD FIGHT ON THEIR SIDE. IN BOTH LETTERS, HE WAS CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT HIMSELF, WRITING ONLY THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED, HE WOULD BE LOYAL TO THE EMPEROR, THEREBY BYPASSING THE PROBLEM SHREWDLY.
BUT SINCE THE TWO WERE SO FOCUSED ON THE POWER STRUGGLE...

SLEEP
...NEITHER ONE OF THEM WAS AWARE HE WAS BEING DECEIVED.
HOW ARE THE PREPARATIONS GOING?
AH, LORD JIAN SHUO.

VERY WELL. EVERYTHING IS GOING SMOOTHLY.
WHAT ARE YOU USING FOR THE POISON?
YOU KNOW THAT FAILURE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.


SWISH!
SWISH
IT'S DRIED ACONITE ROOT. ONE DROP OF THIS IS STRONG ENOUGH TO KILL TEN HORSES.

FORGET ONE DROP. WE'LL HAVE HIM DRINK A WHOLE BUCKET!

Y...YES, SIR!
OTHERWISE IT WON'T BE ENOUGH TO WORK ON HIM.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING ?!

WHACK
CRACK
FORGIVE ME!
THWACK
THWACK
THWACK
THWACK

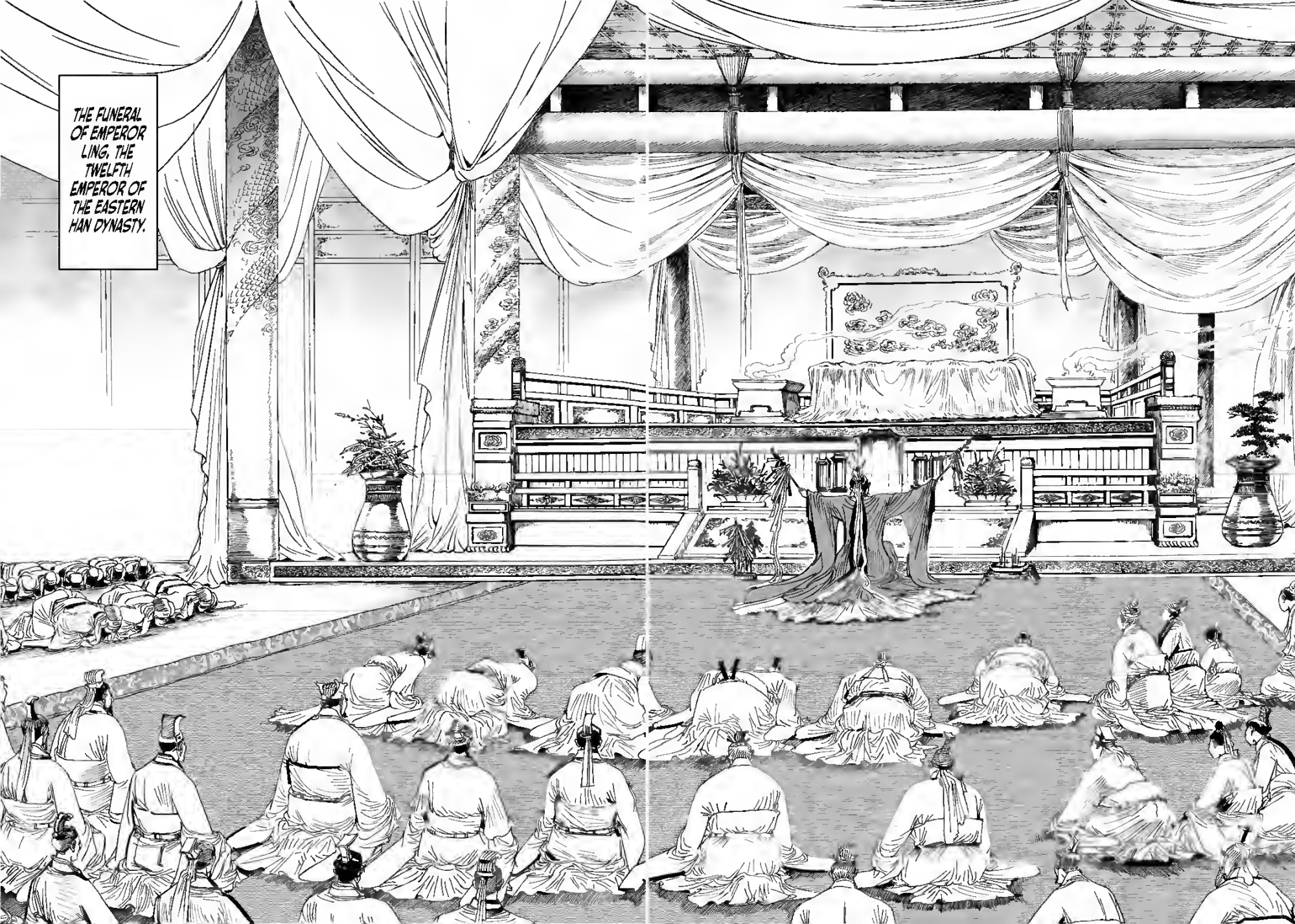
WHACK
MERCY!
FORGIVE ME!
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK

CRACK
WHACK
LORD JIAN SHUO! IT'S AN EMERGENCY!

J-JUST NOW...
WHAT IS IT?!

WHAT?! ARE YOU SURE?!

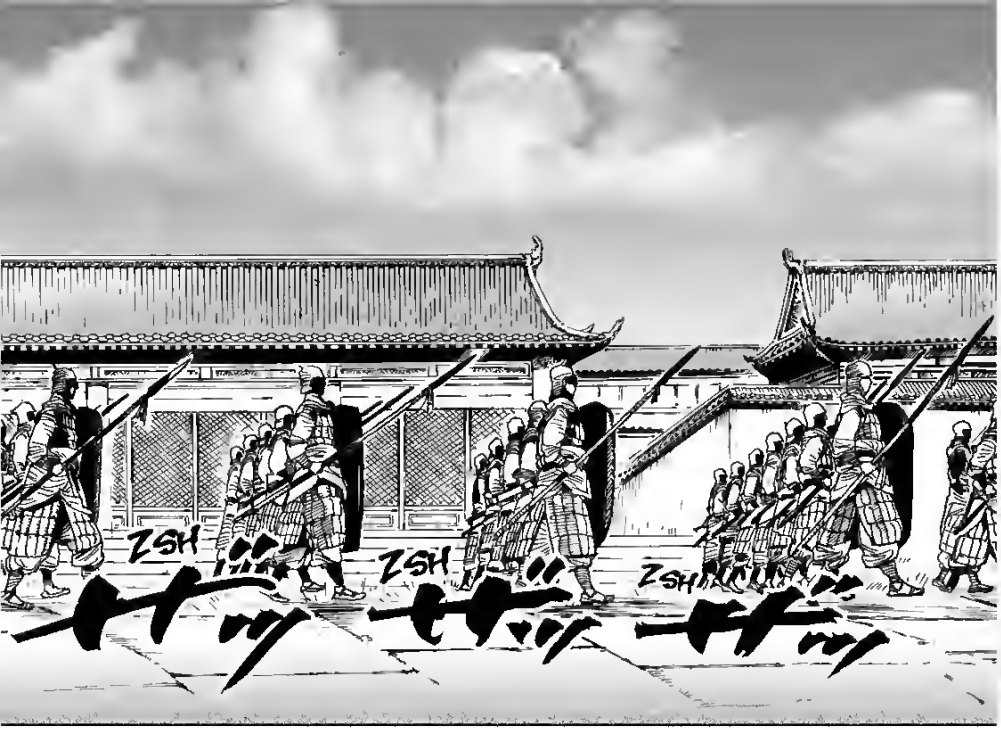
...HIS HIGHNESS THE EMPEROR HAS PASSED AWAY!


THE FUNERAL OF EMPEROR LING, THE TWELFTH EMPEROR OF THE EASTERN HAN DYNASTY.

LORD HE JIN, IF I MAY HAVE A MOMENT.
ARE YOU SURE WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE?
HE WOULDN'T LIE, KNOWING THAT HE WOULD BE KILLED IF HE MADE A MISTAKE.
GOOD.
I'LL SEE FOR MYSELF. WHERE IS HE?
RIGHT THERE.

SO YOU'RE THE ONE
YOU LOOK LIKE A EUNUCH TO ME. WHY WOULD YOU BETRAY A COLLEAGUE LIKE JIAN SHUO?

I BEAR HIM A GRUDGE.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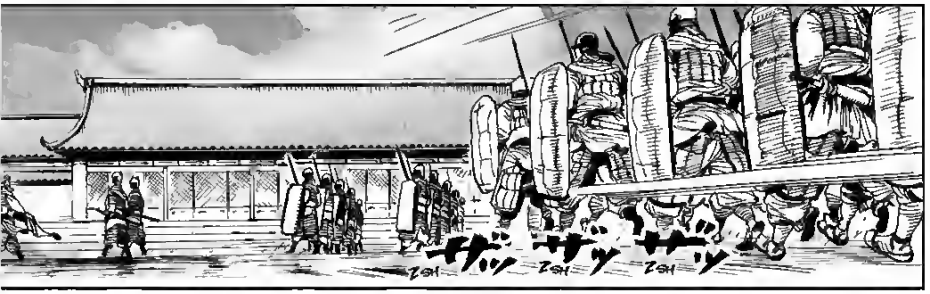
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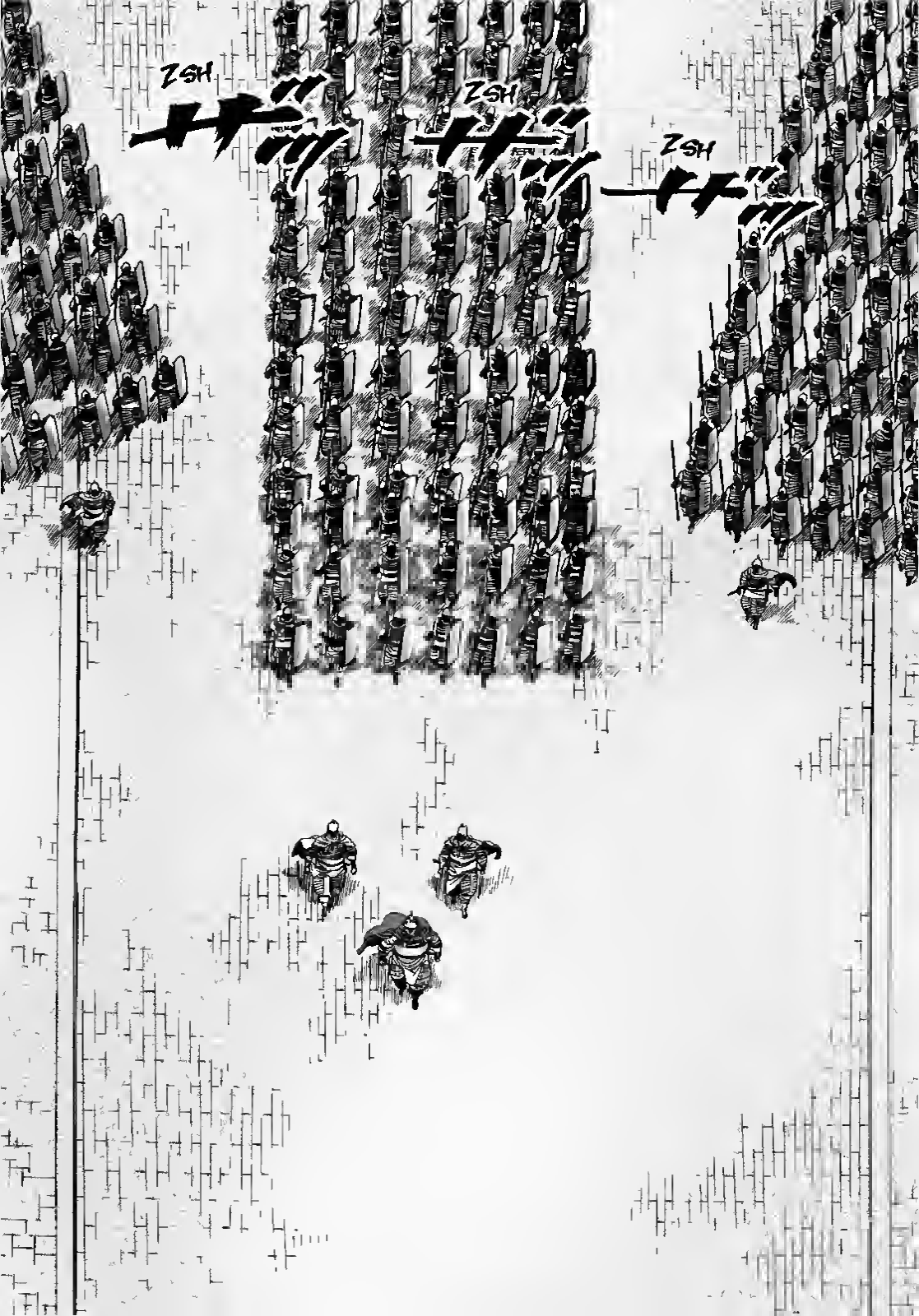
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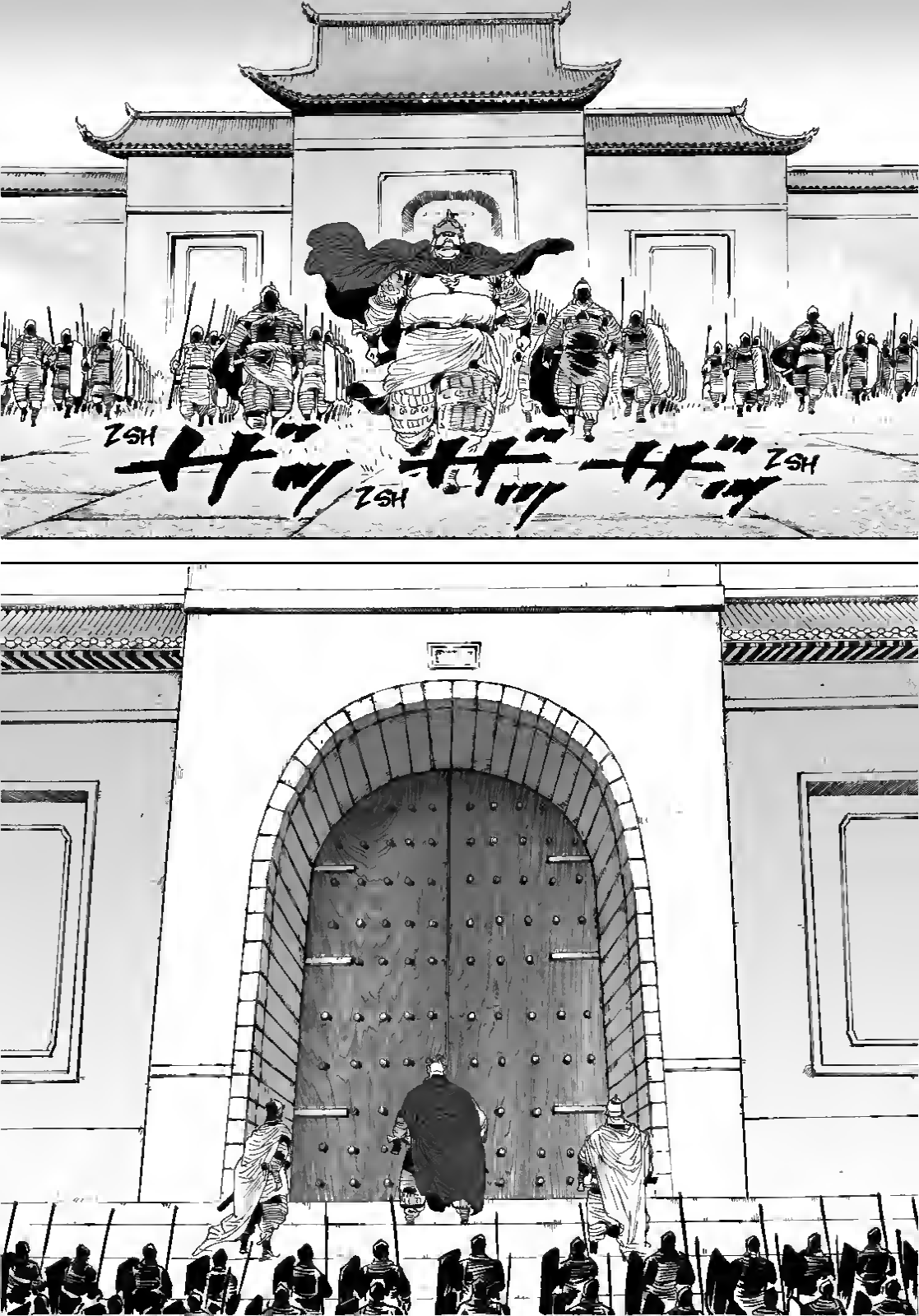

ZSH
ZSH
ZSH

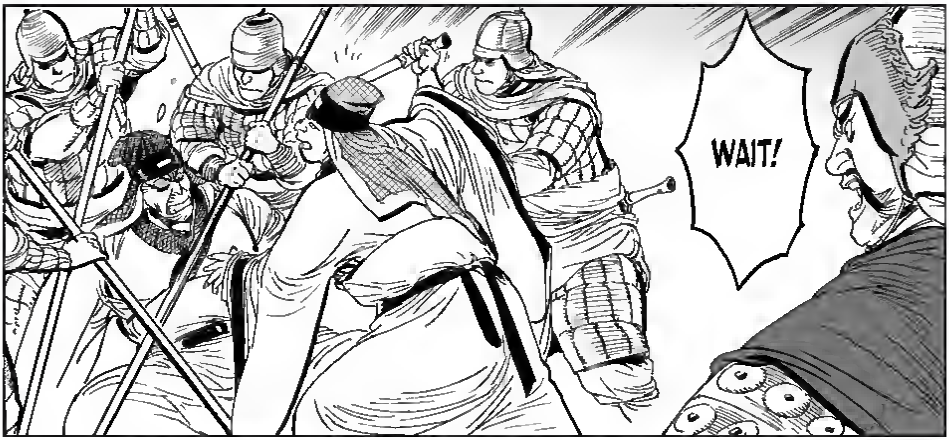
BREAK IT DOWN!
WHUMP
WHUMP

HOW DARE YOU TRY TO KILL ME!
JIAN SHUO, YOU DIRTY BASTARD!

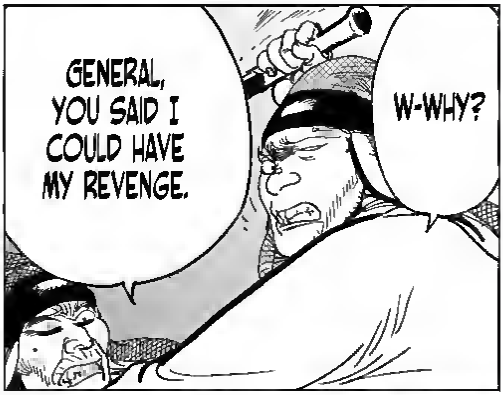
SLASH
SLICE
SLICE

LORD HE JIN, WHAT PROOF DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR ACCUSATIONS ?!
PROOF ?
IF YOU WANT PROOF, I'LL SHOW YOU!
REMEMBER THIS MAN?

AH!
Y-YOU'RE THE ONE!
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST BEAT ME UP?! I'LL SETTLE THE SCORE NOW!
JIAN SHUO!


WAIT!

BUT I WON'T HAVE YOU KILL HIM WITH A DAGGER!
THAT I DID.


GENERAL, YOU SAID I COULD HAVE MY REVENGE.
W-WHY?

THEN WHAT AM I TO DO?

USE THIS.
IT'S THE POISON JIAN SHUO ATTEMPTED TO USE ON ME.
MAKE HIM DRINK IT!
ANYTHING BUT THAT! PLEASE!!
PLEASE FORGIVE ME, LORD HE JIN!

THIS IS THE POISON YOU PRESCRIBED FOR ME!
HA HA HA HA! WHAT ARE YOU SO SCARED OF, JIAN SHUO?
.....

WE ARE BOTH EUNUCHS! HOW CAN YOU THINK IT'S ACCEPTABLE TO DO SUCH A THING TO A COMRADE WHO KNOWS THE SAME PAIN AS YOU?!
STOP, YOU FOOL!
IS IT ACCEPTABLE TO TRAMPLE ON YOUR COMRADE?
THEN LET ME ASK YOU.

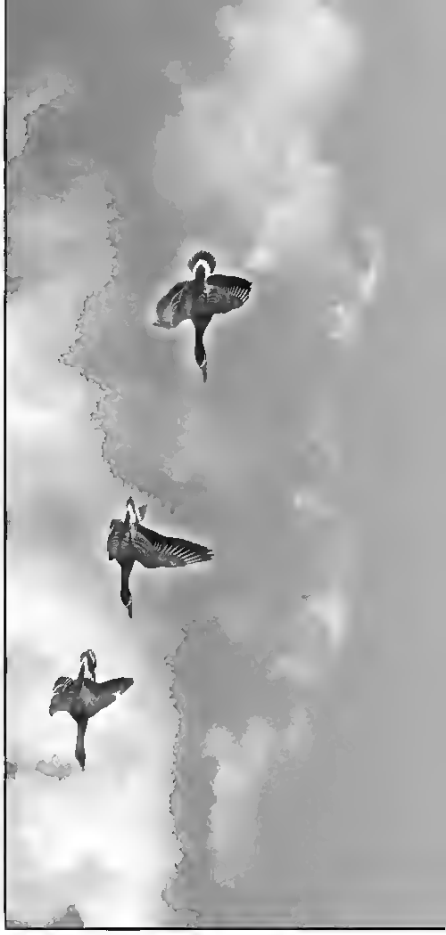
N-NO!
AAUUT!

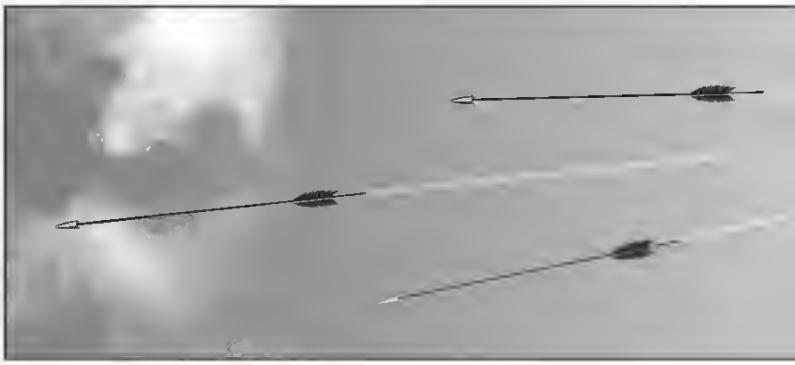
UUUH...
UUH!
KWAAAH!
EE!

UUUH... UUH!
EE!
KWAAAH!

HA HA HA HA!
KUUUH...
THAT'S SOME POISON!

.....

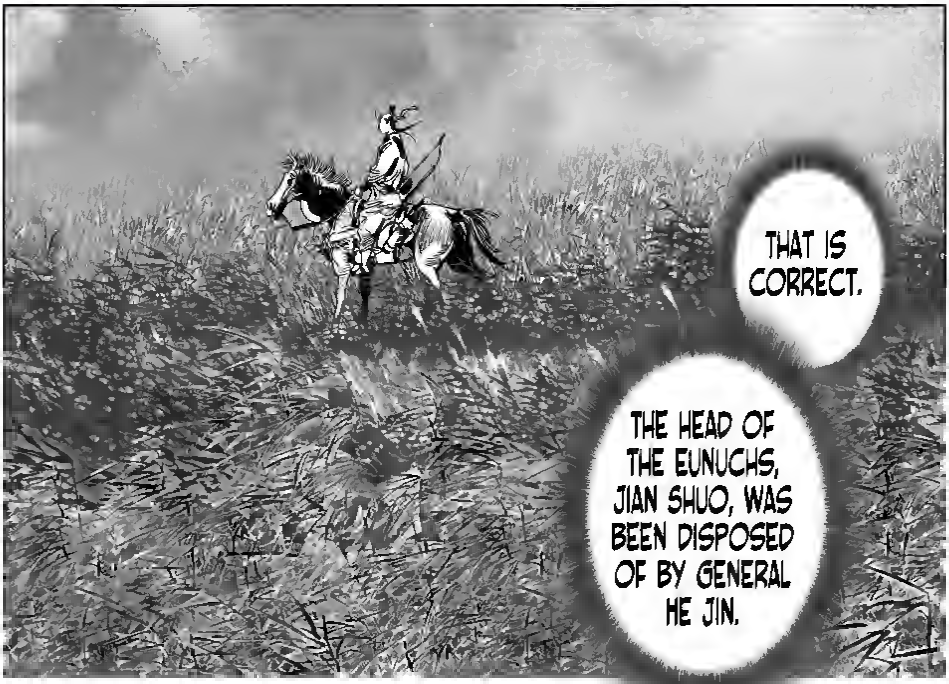




MEANWHILE, CAO CAO WAS HOME IN XIAO COUNTY, THROWING HIMSELF INTO READING AND HUNTING. SOME SAY IT WAS DURING THIS RESPITE THAT HE WROTE CHINA'S FIRST ANNOTATED "SUNZI". CAO CAO WAS CLEARLY NOT ONLY A FIRST-RATE MILITANT BUT A SCHOLAR OF A MAN.

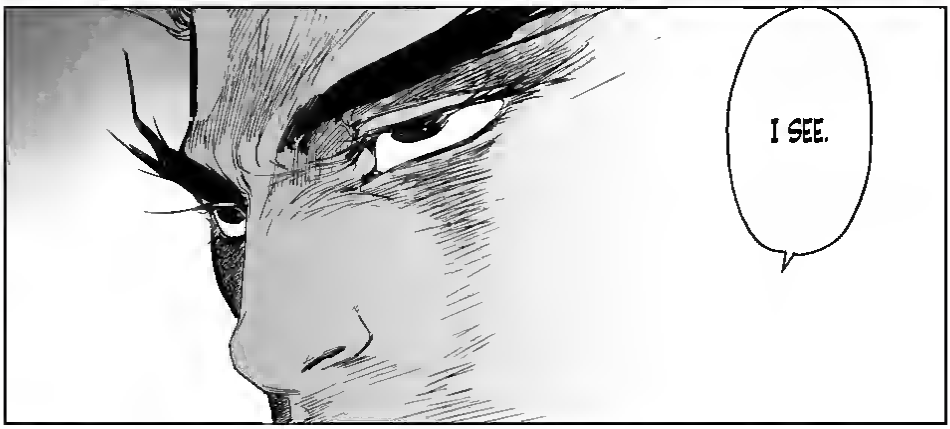
!
IS THERE A FIVE-TIED ONE THERE?

A COUP D'ETAT HAS OCCURRED, LORD CAO CAO.
A COUP...


THAT IS CORRECT.
THE HEAD OF THE EUNUCHS, JIAN SHUO, WAS BEEN DISPOSED OF BY GENERAL HE JIN.

THEN THAT MAKES PRINCE BIAN THE NEW EMPEROR.
YOU DON'T SAY.

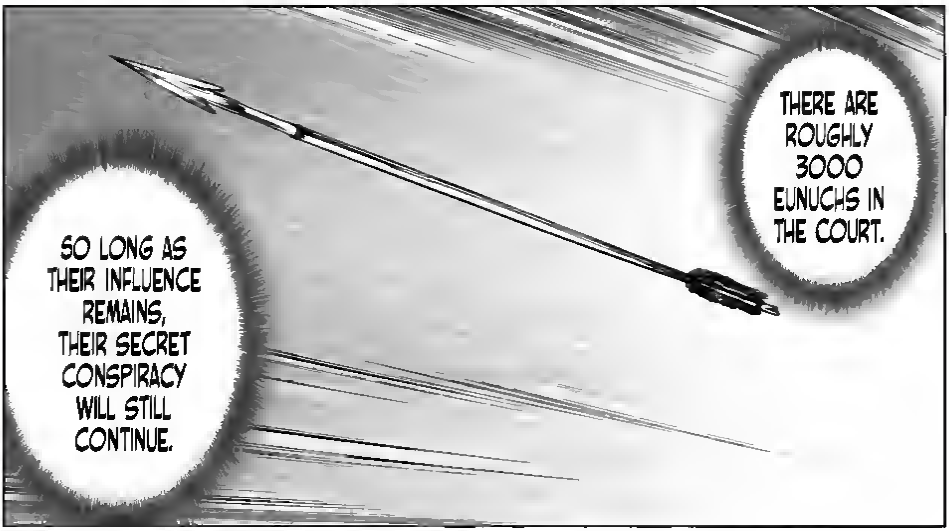
YES.
IT WILL BE LORD BIAN, SON OF CONSORT HE.
HIS ENTHRONEMENT NAME IS "EMPEROR HAN SHAO". AND PRINCE XIE HAS CHANGED HIS NAME TO "PRINCE OF CHENLIU". THE LATE EMPEROR LING'S MOTHER EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG HAS BECOME HIS OFFICIAL GUARDIAN.


I SEE.

JUST AS I SUSPECTED. JIAN SHUO WAS A LOST CAUSE, NOT HAVING AN ARMY OF HIS OWN.
BUT IF THIS IS HOW IT'S TURNED OUT, THEN THE IMPERIAL COURT WILL BE STABLE FOR A LITTLE WHILE YET.

THE REAL BATTLE STARTS NOW.
NOT NECESSARILY.

OH?
AND WHY IS THAT?


THERE ARE ROUGHLY 3000 EUNUCHS IN THE COURT.
SO LONG AS THEIR INFLUENCE REMAINS, THEIR SECRET CONSPIRACY WILL STILL CONTINUE.

JUST AS WE THOUGHT. TO DEFEAT THAT UPSTART, WE NEED MILITARY STRENGTH.
DO WE KNOW ANY MEN WHO WOULD LEND US THE POWER WE NEED?

AT THIS RATE, WE'LL ALL BE DONE AWAY WITH!
YOU IDIOT.
THEY WERE BOTH DISMISSED UNDER JIAN SHUO FOR NOT PAYING UP BRIBES.
THEY HAVE REAL EXPERIENCE AND ARE STRONG.
HOW ABOUT HUANGFU SONG OR ZHU JUN?
THEN HOW ABOUT CAO CAO MENGDE?
HE'S A YOUNG AND INTREPID GENERAL.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
THAT DID HAPPEN.

THEN THAT MAKES THIS EVEN TRICKIER.
I HEARD THAT CAO CAO WAS ILL.
HE'D BE THE MAN FOR THE JOB, BUT I DOUBT HE COULD MAKE IT OUT HERE.
WE NEED A MAN WHO WILL LET US USE HIS ARMY AND CONTROL HIS SIMPLE MIND.
THEN HOW ABOUT THE MAN CALLED DONG ZHUO ZHONGYING?

* A nomadic clan to the north that menaced China from the times of Emperor Wu

OH, THAT'S QUITE A PROMOTION.
I HEAR HE WAS BORN INTO POVERTY IN LONGXI COMMANDERY BUT ROSE FROM THE RANK OF COMMON PROVINCIAL ARMY SOLDIER TO HIS CURRENT POSITION AS INSPECTOR OF BINGZHOU.

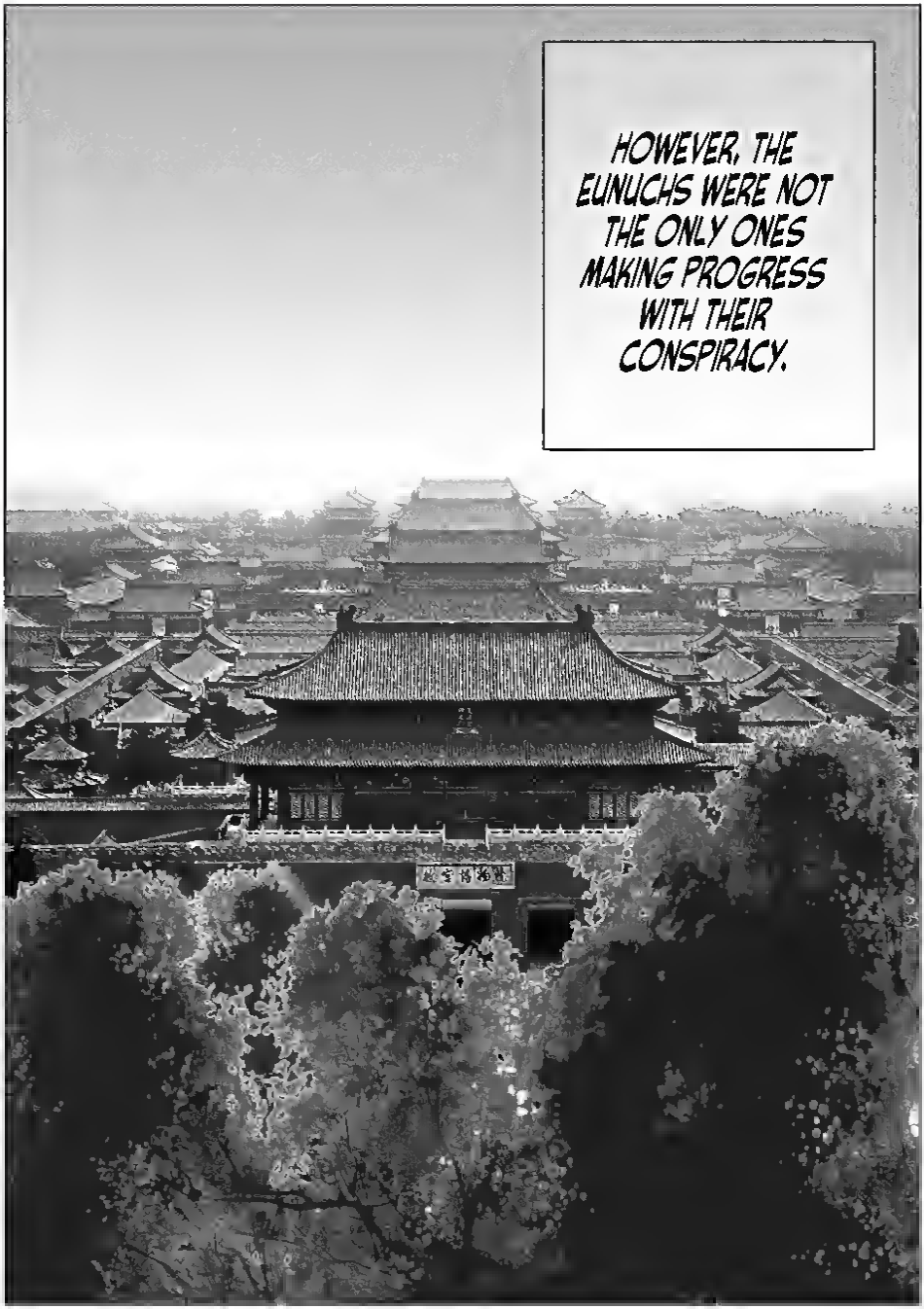
AND A MAN LIKE THAT PROBABLY DOESN'T HAVE MUCH THINKING POWER.
ALL WE WANT IS A DUMB BRUTE WHO CAN FIGHT A WAR.
THAT'S RIGHT.
AGREED.

HE HAS NO LINEAGE TO SPEAK OF, BUT TO BE PROMOTED FROM PRIVATE TO ARMY OFFICER TO PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR TO VICEROY AND THEN INSPECTOR, IT'S LIKE AN UDUMBARA FLOWER BLOSSOMING*.

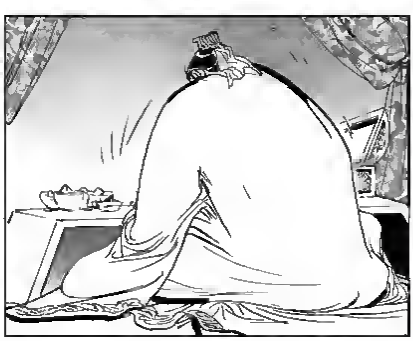
* An imaginary flower from Hindu legend said to blossom once every three thousand years, used to express how rare something is

GRANTED, THE FIRST STEP TO HIS SUCCESS WAS A MAN-TO-MAN FIGHT WITH THE LEADER OF THE XIONGNU IN WHICH HE WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN OVER THIRTY PLACES. HE STILL DEFEATED HIS OPPONENT. HIS ONLY REDEEMING QUALITY IS HIS SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH!
IT'S SETTLED!

WE'LL DISPATCH AN IMPERIAL RESCRIPT TO SUMMON HIM!
LET US SEND FOR HIM AT ONCE!
IT'S SETTLED!


HOWEVER, THE EUNUCHS WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES MAKING PROGRESS WITH THEIR CONSPIRACY.

BANG



LORD HE JIN!
THUD
ドゴッ
THUD
ドゴッ
THUD
ドゴッ

I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU, YUAN SHAO AND YUAN SHU. WHAT BRINGS YOU TWO BROTHERS HERE?
O-OH, WHAT A SURPRISE!
WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO STAMPING OUT THE EUNUCHS?!
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE COUNTING YOUR MONEY, LORD HE JIN!
YUAN SHAO BENCHU OF THE DISTINGUISHED HAN ARISTOCRACY.

THAT'S RIGHT! WE LENT A HAND IN ENTHRONING EMPEROR HAN SHAO BECAUSE YOU PROMISED TO EXECUTE THE EUNUCHS!
YUAN SHAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER, YUAN SHU GONGLU.
I UNDERSTAND THAT.
I KNOW.

BUT EMPRESS DOWAGER HE SIMPLY WON'T CONSENT.
BUT EMPRESS DOWAGER HE SIMPLY WON'T CONSENT.
...SHE FEARS SHE WOULDN'T EVER GET TO DRINK TEA AGAIN!
THE HAN DYNASTY HAS RULED FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS! IT SHOULDN'T CRUMBLE OVER SOME CUP OF TEA!
DON'T BE A FOOL!

SIR YUAN SHAO.
WATCH YOUR MOUTH. DON'T YOU DARE CALL ME A FOOL, WHEN I AM NOT ONLY A GENERAL BUT THE UNCLE OF THE THIRTEENTH EMPEROR!

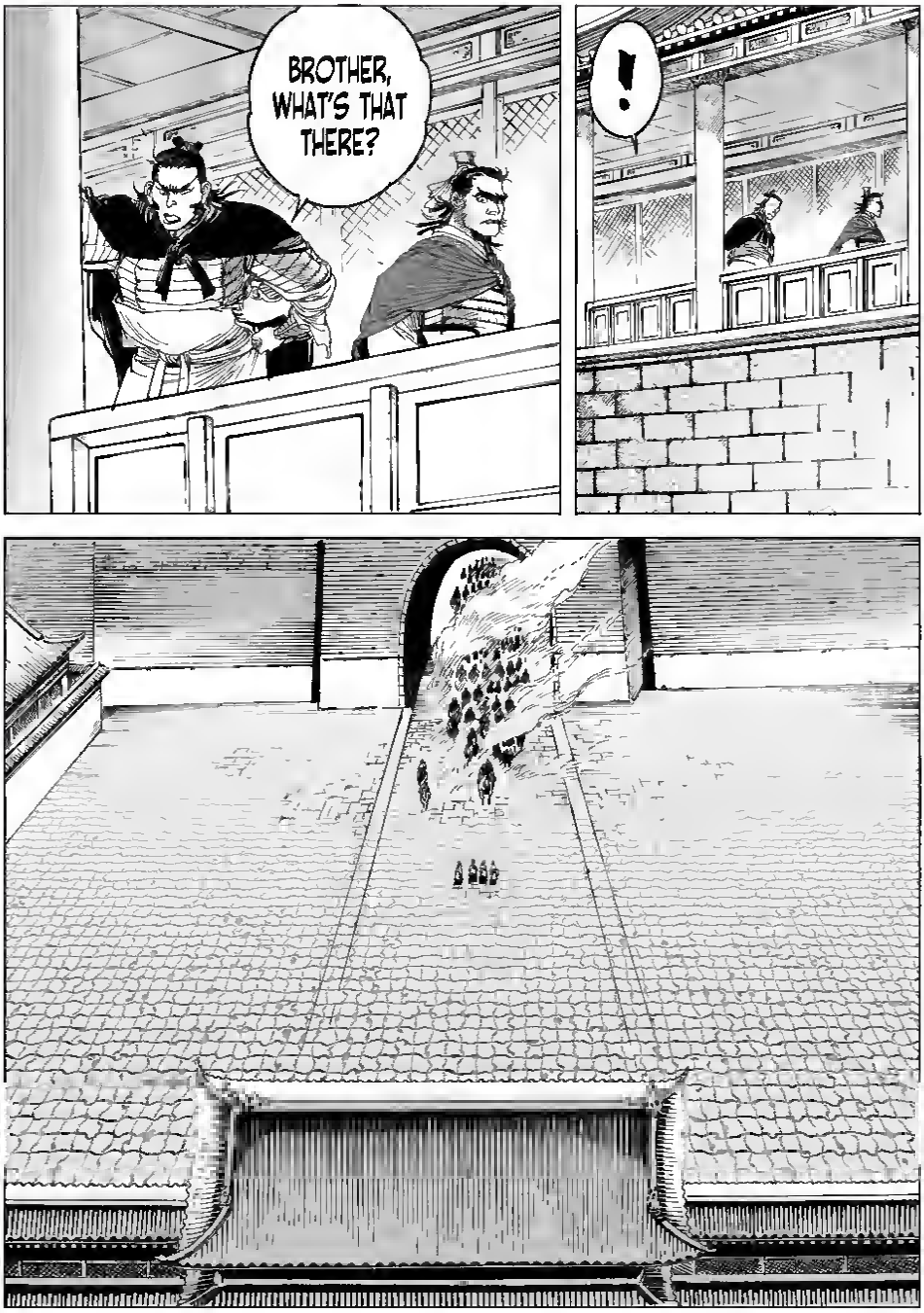
* Highest ranking officials in the Dynasty

HOW THINGS STAND NOW, HE JIN WON'T LISTEN TO US.
WHAT DO WE DO, BROTHER?

I KNOW, I KNOW.

OUR PLANS TO PURGE THE EUNUCHS, MANIPULATE HE JIN AND CONTROL THE EMPIRE FROM THE SHADOWS WILL COME TO NOTHING.

DAMMIT! AND NOW'S THE PERFECT TIME TO FINISH OFF THE EUNUCHS WHILE THEY'RE STILL DEFENSELESS!
BUT SO LONG AS THAT STATUS-SEEKER DOESN'T ACT, WE WON'T GET ANYWHERE


BROTHER, WHAT'S THAT THERE?
!

ANYWAY, ALL THIS FURY'S GOT ME HUNGRY. LET'S GET SOMETHING TO EAT
IT'S PROBABLY THE EXPEDITION OF THE MAYOR OF THE CAPITAL* COME BACK FROM EXTERMINATING BANDITS.
THAT?
DID YOU SAY ZHANG RANG ?!
IF THAT WERE THE MAYOR OF THE CAPITAL THEN WOULD THE EUNUCH ELDER ZHANG RANG REALLY GO OUT TO MEET HIM?
WAIT, YOU'RE WRONG.

* The Police Chief of Luoyang

OH, YOU MADE IT!
WE'VE BEEN SO IMPATIENT WAITING FOR YOU!
WOOOO
ヒュウウ
WOOOO
ヒュウウ…

董
BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR, I HAVE COME FROM TAIYUAN OF BINGZHOU!
I AM DONG ZHUO ZHONGYING!

WHILE WE'VE BEEN LOSING TIME, THE EUNUCHS HAVE GONE AHEAD AND MADE THEIR MOVE!
SHIT!
AFTER JIAN SHUO WAS KILLED AND THEY FELT THE PAIN OF NOT HAVING MILITARY STRENGTH, THEY READIED AN ARMY THAT'LL TAKE ORDERS FROM THEM.
EXACTLY.
TH-THEN THAT MEANS THE EUNUCHS HAVE AN ARMY TO BACK THEM UP NOW?
HRMMM ..
WHAT NOW, BROTHER? THIS COMPLICATES THINGS.

XIAO COUNTY

LORD CAO CAO, WHO IS THAT LETTER FROM?
YUAN SHAO?
YOU MEAN *THE* YUAN SHAO?
YUAN SHAO FROM LUOYANG.
YES.
THE YUAN SHAO. WE GREW UP TOGETHER AND HIS HOUSE IS RIGHT IN MY NEIGHBOR-HOOD.

HE SAID THE SITUATION IS COMING TO A HEAD AND HE WANTS ME TO COME.
SO WHAT DID HE WRITE?

YOU DON'T SEEM VERY FOND OF THE YUAN BROTHERS.
HA HA HA!

YOU CAN'T GO. YUAN SHAO'S AN IMPOSTOR.
AND HIS LITTLE BROTHER, YUAN SHU, IS EVEN WORSE.

I KNOW.
I HATE THEM.
THOSE TWO ARE POWER-HUNGRY MEN WITH NO REAL COMPETENCE WHO ONLY FALL BACK ON THEIR DISTINGUISHED FAMILY NAME.
THE PROBLEM IS WHO WILL CONTROL THE EMPEROR, AND REIGN SUPREME USING HIS AUTHORITY AS BACKING.
BUT IF I DON'T ACT FAST, I'LL LOSE A PRECIOUS OPPORTUNITY.

THE ONES WITH THE UPPER HAND ARE THOSE OF THE HE JIN PARTY BECAUSE THEY CONTROL THE YOUNG EMPEROR HAN SHAO.
BUT SO LONG AS THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU REMAINS, THE EUNUCHS CAN STILL MAKE A COMEBACK.
YUAN SHAO AND HIS BROTHER HAVE NO ADVANTAGE OVER EITHER PARTY, AND THAT'S WHY THEY'RE ASKING FOR MY HELP.

I DON'T KNOW.
DO YOU THINK YOU STAND A CHANCE, MY LORD?
BUT NO MATTER WHAT, CHAOS IS SURE TO ENSUE.
AND WHEN IT DOES, I MUST DO WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN THE EMPEROR ONTO MY SIDE. THAT IS THE REAL CHALLENGE!

LUOYANG
THAT DONG ZHUO FELLOW NEVER ENTERS THE CASTLE AND JUST STAYS CAMPED OUT THERE.
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, BROTHER.

I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THAT TOO.
WHY IS IT?
WHY ELSE? HE'S AFRAID OF SHOWING HIS TRUE AFFILIATION, JUST AS YOU AND I ARE

LORD CAO CAO!
YOU CAME!
I COULDN'T DENY A REQUEST FROM MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND.
TELL ME. WHAT'S THE CURRENT SITUATION?

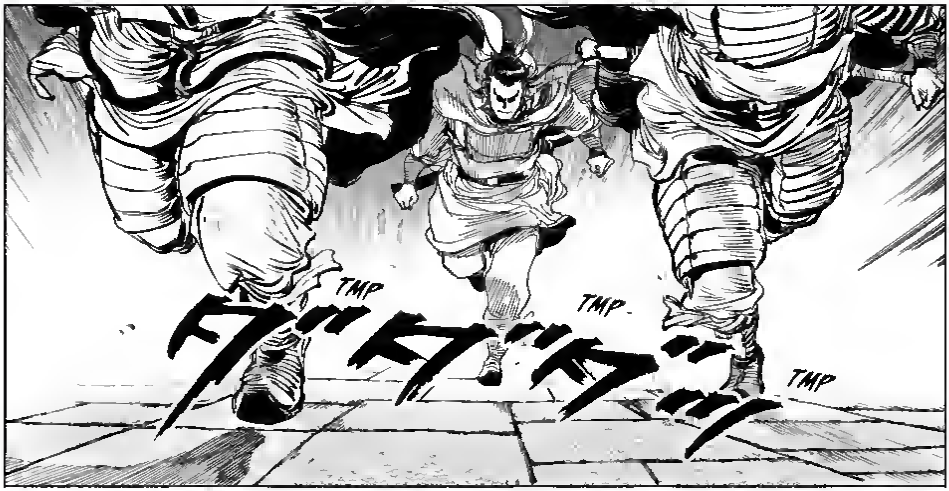
WE OF THE ARISTOCRATIC INFLUENCE, WHO CALL OURSELVES THE CLEAR WATER FACTION, JUST KEEP FEELING SMALLER.
HE JIN'S POWER KEEPS GROWING AND THE EUNUCHS HAVE DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO TAKING AN OFFENSIVE POSITION.
NOT GOOD.

I-IT'S AN EMERGENCY, LORD YUAN SHAO!

I SEE.
BUT DON'T BE DISCOURAGED. THOUGH HE JIN MAY HAVE GOTTEN STRONGER, HE WILL INEVITABLY MAKE A MISTAKE.
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR IT.

EM...
WHAT IS IT, TIAN FENG? YOU'RE PALE AS A GHOST!
P... POISONED ?!
EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG HAS BEEN POISONED TO DEATH.
YUAN SHAO'S FOLLOWER, TIAN FENG
ACTU-ALLY...
WHO DID IT?!

THE MURDERER HAS BEEN APPREHENDED...
...AND IS BEING QUESTIONED NOW.
W-WHAT?!
YOU MEAN THE CRIMINAL'S BEEN CAUGHT?!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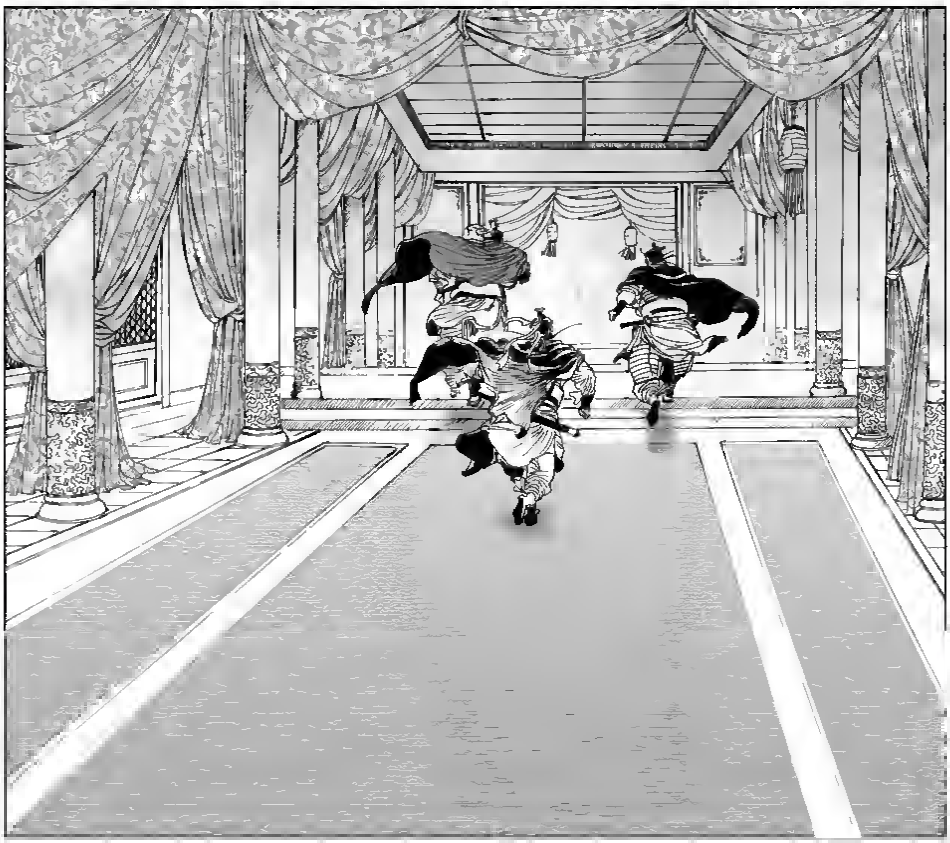


WHERE'S THE MURDERER THEY CAUGHT ?!
WH... WHAT A MESS!
THERE...

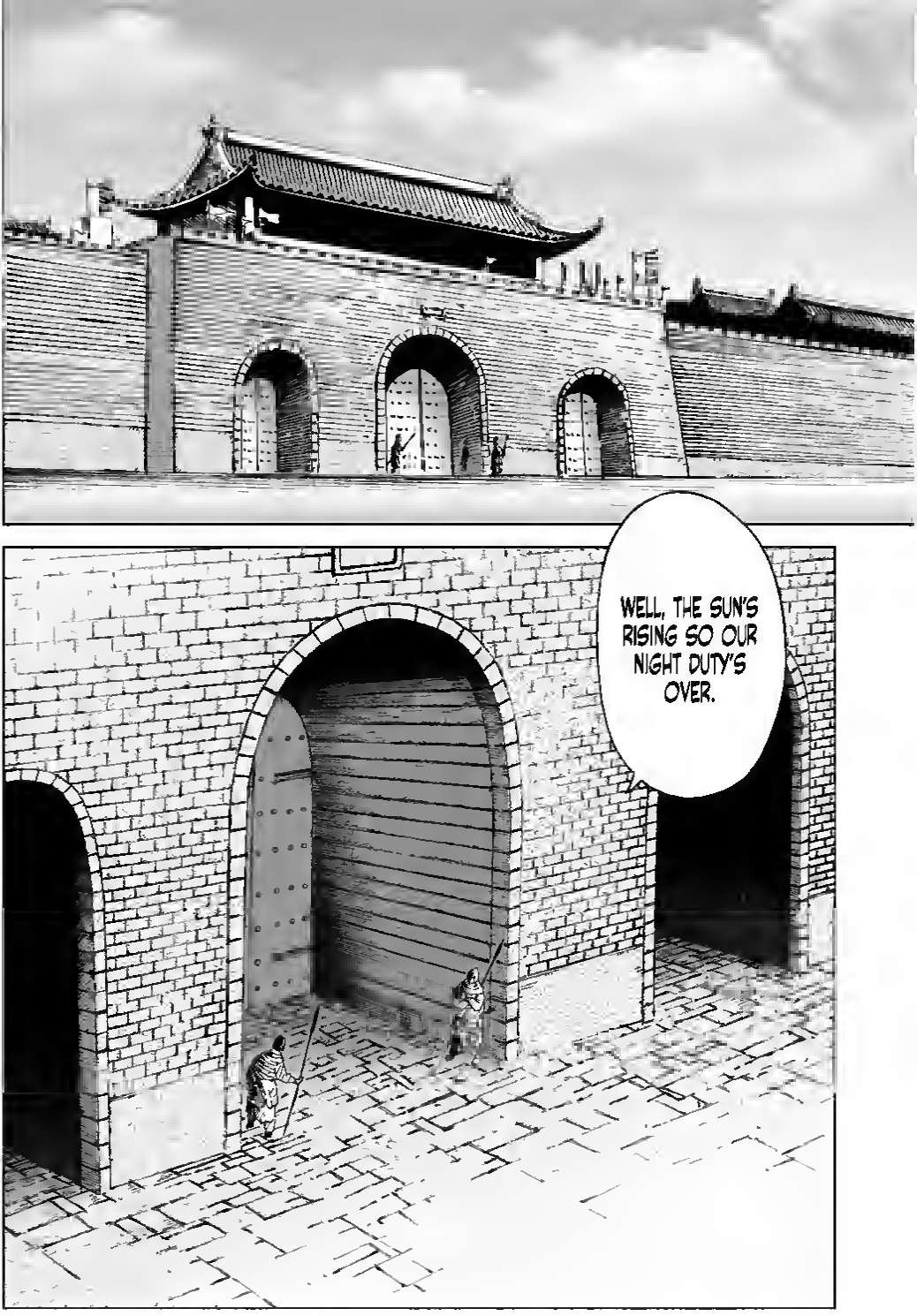
IF YOU WERE ABLE TO PULL SOMETHING LIKE THIS OFF, THEN I TAKE IT YOU'RE PREPARED TO BE TORN LIMB FROM LIMB NOW.
P-PLEASE FORGIVE ME!
SO IT WAS YOU.
WELL, WELL.

GENERAL HE JIN THREATENED TO KILL ME IF I DIDN'T DO IT.
HA HA HA HA!
THIS IS WHAT THEY MEAN WHEN THEY SAY THAT THE FEAR IS OFTEN GREATER THAN THE DANGER, YUAN SHAO.
WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE PIPSQUEAK TO GIVE HIMSELF AWAY.
INDEED!

THAT'S RIGHT. I HAVE A DUTY NOW TO SUBJUGATE HE JIN FOR MURDER OF THE EMPRESS DOWAGER.
SO FAR HE'S TAKEN UP ARMS FOR FREE OF BEING BETRAYED, BUT THIS IS A MOST FORTUITOUS TURNI OF EVENTS!

WE WILL CRUSH HE JIN AT ONCE!
YUAN SHU, AMASS AS MANY TROOPS AS YOU CAN!

LEAVE IT TO ME, BROTHER!
WAIT! NOT JUST HE JIN!
WE'LL KILL ALL THE EUNUCHS WHILE WE'RE AT IT TOO!


WELL, THE SUN'S RISING SO OUR NIGHT DUTY'S OVER.

YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
SLEEP'S THE MOST IMPORTANT!
YOU SAID IT. I THINK I'LL GO HOME, HAVE A DRINK, AND THEN HIT THE HAY.
WHAT'S THAT?
WHAT DID YOU HEAR??
DO YOU HEAR THAT?

WOOOOOSH
ヒュウウウ…

SPAT
SPAT
SPAT
SPAT
SPAT
SPAT
SPAT

KILL EVERYONE IN THE CASTLE!
GO!
オオオ…

ドーン
BOOM
わあああ
WOAAAAH!
ドオオオオオ!

WELL, I THINK I, YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT, WILL GO ON AHEAD.

W-WHAT IS IT?
WAIT!
I'M SURE WE'LL BE FINE. BUT IT'D JUST BE SUCH A PAIN IF THEY STARTED UP.
SORRY, CAO CAO. BUT TAKE YOUR ARMY AND MAKE A DIVERSIONARY ACTION ON DONG ZHUO FOR ME.

GOOD THEN, I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
GOT IT. JUST LEAVE THEM TO ME.
W-WHY, LORD CAO CAO?!
IF WE DON'T ENTER THE COURT, THEN WE CAN'T LURE OUT THE EMPEROR!
LET'S GO, YUAN SHU!
THUD
THUD
THUD

I THOUGHT YOU JOINED YUAN SHAO WITH THE INTENT OF CONTROLLING THE EMPEROR AND GAINING SUPREMACY.
DON'T WORRY. ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN.

BROTHER, THEY FELL RIGHT FOR IT!
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
IDIOT!
DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY YEARS I'VE SPENT IN THIS CITY FULL OF DECEIT?
TALKING HIM INTO IT WAS AS EASY AS TWISTING A BABY'S ARM.

NOW, YUAN SHU. JUST AS WE PLANNED, I'LL KIDNAP THE PRINCE WHILE YOU KILL HE JIN!
IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL, THE EMPIRE WILL BE OURS STARTING TODAY!

オオオオオオ
OOOOAAHH
OOOH

WHAT'S BECOME OF THE EMPEROR?!
I DON'T CARE WHO, SOMEBODY BRING ME THE EMPEROR!

OH, YUAN SHU!
YOU KILLED HE JIN?!

BROTHER!
THUD
THUD
THUD

SEE FOR YOUR-SELF!

.....
AND YOU, BROTHER? DID YOU FIND THE EMPEROR?
BOTH EMPEROR HAN SHAO AND THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU ESCAPED TO THE YELLOW RIVER THROUGH A SECRET PATH!
LORD!
WHAT?!

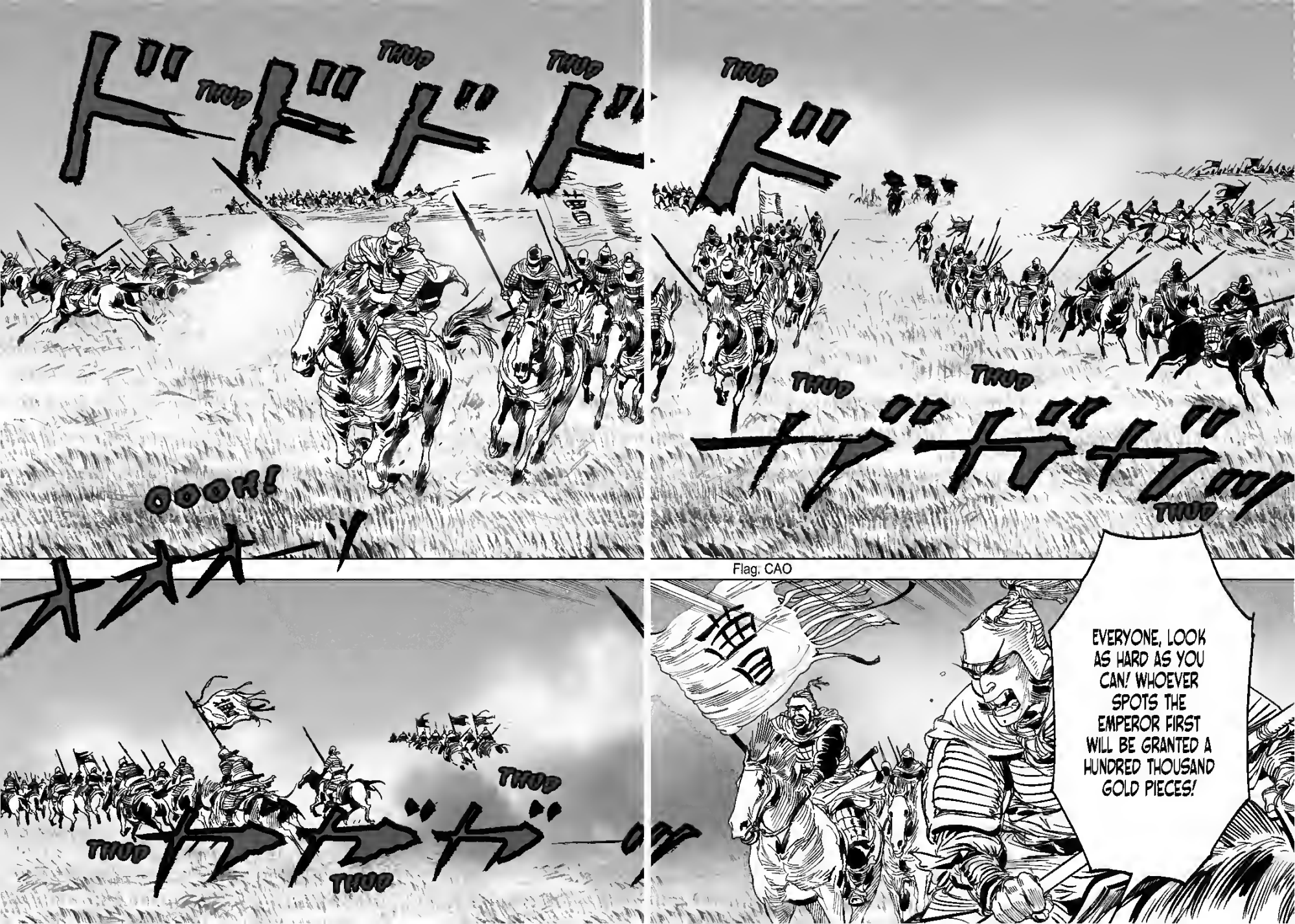
曹
曹

W-WHAT DO WE DO NOW, MY LORD?
THE IMPERIAL COURT'S ON FIRE.
R-REPORT?
YES.
I'M SURE AN ESCAPE ROUTE WAS CONSTRUCTED IN THE IMPERIAL COURT FOR THE EMPEROR'S SAKE, SHOULD JUST SUCH A SITUATION ARISE.
WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN THE REPORT YET.
WE WAIT.

I'VE SENT A SPY TO SNIFF IT OUT FOR ME.
THE WAY YUAN SHAO ATTACKED BLINDLY, HE'LL PROBABLY NEVER DETECT IT, LET ALONE GET A HOLD OF THE EMPEROR.
ZSH
OH!

ZIP
EMPEROR HAN SHAO IS AFLOAT ON THE YELLOW RIVER.
W-WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?!
.....

H-HE CAN'T BE HUMAN.
THAT WAS MY SPY. HE MAKES SURE NEVER TO SHOW HIS FACE, SO NOT EVEN I KNOW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.
EVERY-ONE, LISTEN TO ME!
HE WHO GAINS THE EMPEROR WINS THIS COUP!
DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO FIND THE EMPEROR AND RETURN HIM TO THE PALACE!


THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
OOOH!
Flag. CAO
EVERYONE, LOOK AS HARD AS YOU CAN! WHOEVER SPOTS THE EMPEROR FIRST WILL BE GRANTED A HUNDRED THOUSAND GOLD PIECES!

W-WHAT'S THAT OVER THERE?

OOH!

WHAT IS IT? DID YOU FIND HIM?

HM?

ZSH
ZSH
ZSH

董
董

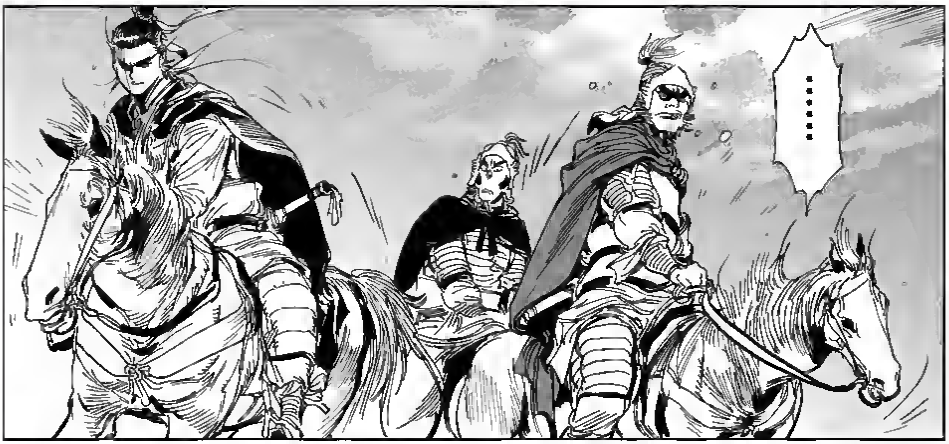
Flag:DONG

WHAT IS IT, CAO CAO? WHY DID YOU STOP?

HE'S MINE! DON'T MAKE A MOVE!
CAO CAO!
THUD
THUD
THUD

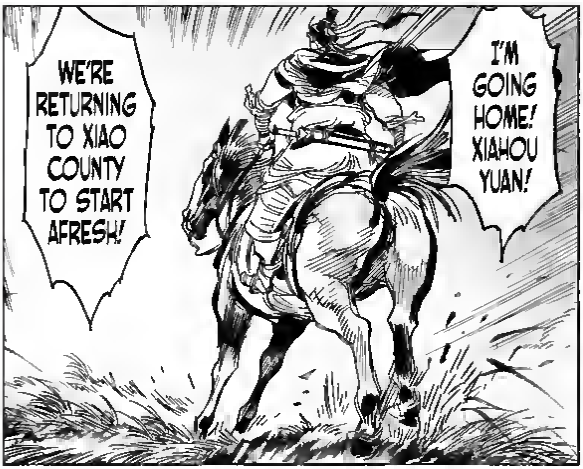
TH-
THAT'S
...!
DONG ZHUO!
WHY'S HE
HOLDING
EMPEROR HAN
SHAO AND THE
PRINCE OF
CHENLIU?
董

IT IS I, DONG ZHUO ZHONGYING, INSPECTOR OF BINGZHOU, WHO PROUDLY PRESENTS THE THIRTEENTH EMPEROR, EMPEROR HAN SHAO, AND THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU SAFE IN MY HANDS!
CLEAR THE WAY!

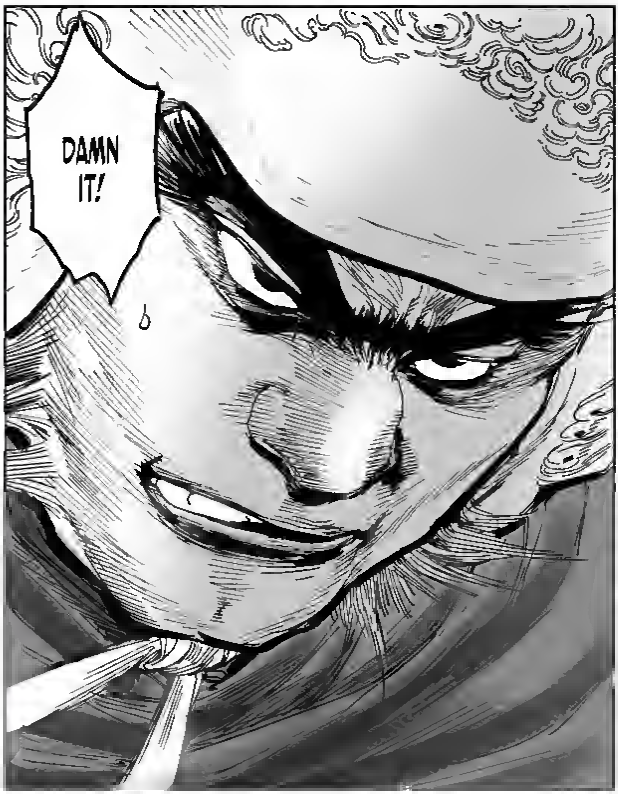


I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST A COUNTRY GENERAL FROM THE OUTSKIRTS.
BUT HE IS QUITE AN IMPRESSIVE MAN.
WE LOSE, YUAN SHAO.
WE STILL HAVE HOPE!
LET'S GET HIM BACK, BROTHER!

DON'T. HE HAS 30,000 MEN ON HIS SIDE. WE ONLY HAVE 5,000.
WE ARE NO MATCH.

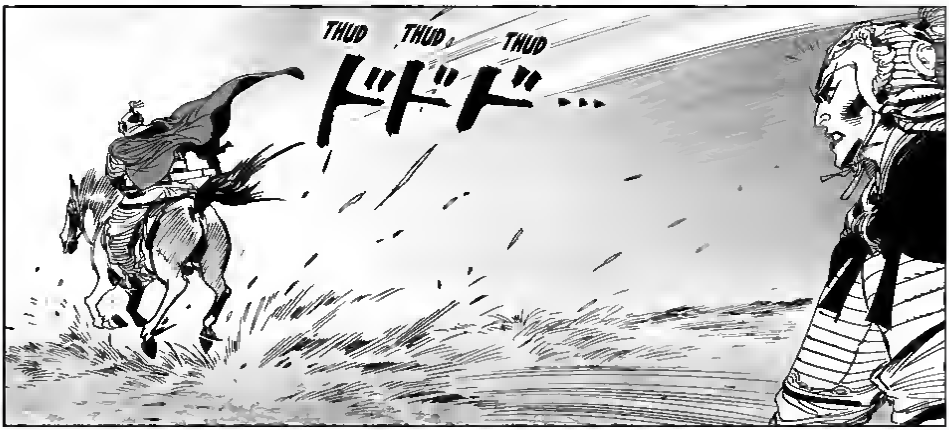

I'M GOING HOME! XIAHOU YUAN!
WE'RE RETURNING TO XIAO COUNTY TO START AFRESH!

.....


DAMN IT!

BROTHER, NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.
WE HAVE TO STEAL BACK THE EMPEROR SOMEHOW!
NEHIGH!
ヒヒーン
ドドド


THUD
THUD
THUD
ドドドド…

BROTHER! WAIT FOR ME!
DON'T LEAVE ME BEHIND!

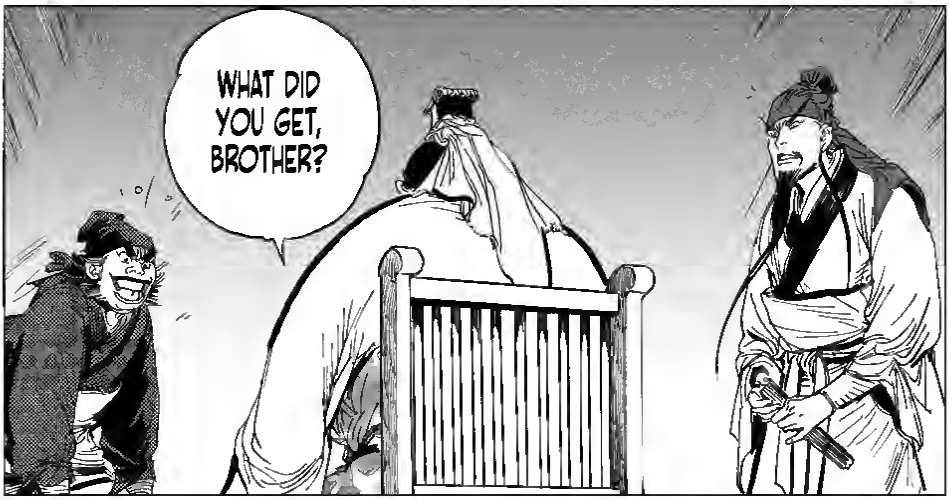
MEANWHILE, LIU BEI AND HIS MEN WERE FAR AWAY FROM THE CAPITAL IN ANJI COUNTY, ZHONGSHAN.

* Commandant of the military affairs

UGH, I'M BORED.
AND BOREDOM MAKES A MAN DULL, BROTHER.
IF YOU'RE BORED, THEN HELP ME ORGANIZE THESE DOCUMENTS.
YOU HAVE NO MANNERS, ZHANG FEI!
FOR YOUR INFORMATION, BROTHER...
...RUMOR HAS IT THAT PIRATE SCOUNDREL SUN JIAN WAS PROMOTED FROM MINISTER OF WAR* TO VICEROY OF CHANGSHA AND NOW HE'S GOT A WHOLE ARMY UNDER HIM AS THEIR GENERAL.

* Commander of a guerrilla army

AND WHAT DOES THAT MAKE US?
WE SPEND OUR DAYS CONVICTING PETTY THIEVES AND MEDIATING FOR QUARRELING COUPLES.
OF COURSE! I FINALLY GOT IT!
WHEN ARE WE FINALLY GOING TO GET OUT INTO THE WORLD?!


WHAT DID YOU GET, BROTHER?

I'VE FOUND PROOF THAT THE COUNTY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN CHEATING WITH THE TAXES AND POCKETING THE MONEY FOR THEMSELVES.
LOOK AT THIS. THESE ARE THE ACTUAL NUMBERS EMPEROR LING CRUNCHED IN HIS SURVEY, BUT ONLY HALF OF THAT NUMBER IS REFLECTED IN THIS COUNTY REPORT.
THEY TAMPERED WITH HOW MANY ACRES ARE ACTUALLY UNDER TILLAGE AND POCKETED THE TAXES INSTEAD!

I WON'T TOLERATE ANY MORE OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!
QUIET, ZHANG FEI!
WITH A PERSONALITY LIKE THAT, IT'S NO WONDER SUN JIAN'S TAKING ALL THE PRESTIGE FOR HIMSELF.
YOU'RE SO ENGROSSED IN THAT, YOU WEREN'T EVEN LISTENING?

LET HIM BE, GUAN.
ZHANG FEI'S RIGHT. MAYBE IF I WERE MORE OF A SCOUNDREL, I WOULDN'T CAUSE YOU SO MUCH ANXIETY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, LORD LIU BEI?
IF YOU WERE A SCOUNDREL, WE WOULDN'T FOLLOW YOU!

ZHANG FEI!
APOLOGIZE TO LORD LIU BEI THIS INSTANT!
WHAT IS ALL THIS YELLING ABOUT?

AH...

WHY DO YOU NOT GO OUT TO WELCOME THE COUNTY INSPECTOR WHO HAS COME ALL THE WAY FROM THE CAPITAL? YOU LOWLY PRECINCT CHIEFS ARE NOT PAYING ATTENTION!
MORE IMPORTANTLY, I AM WEARY FROM MY JOURNEY.
THAT'S ENOUGH.

WON'T YOU PLEASE WASH MY FEET?
AAAH...I AM SO TIRED.
I'LL PREPARE THE WATER RIGHT AWAY.
YES, FORGIVE ME FOR NOT OFFERING FIRST.

I WANT THE CHIEF HIMSELF TO WASH THEM.
NOT YOU.

W...W...
WHAT...
GRRRR!
GRAB

I WILL WASH THEM FOR YOU.
GLADLY.

GOOD.

HEH HEH HEH. YOU'RE AWFULLY OBEDIENT.
SINCE YOU'RE SO OBEDIENT, I HAVE A REQUEST.
AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?
LEAN IN CLOSE.
I DON'T WANT TO SAY THIS TOO LOUDLY.

COUNTY INSPECTOR.
MAY I ASK YOU ONE THING?
GO AHEAD, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ASK?
HOW DID YOU COME TO BE SUCH A VULGAR MAN?

GRAB
WHAT DID YOU SAY TO ME?!
JUMP
TWIST

AAAAH!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THE INSPECTOR, YOU'LL BE A WANTED MAN JUST LIKE US!
YOU FINALLY DID IT, BROTHER.
HA HA HA HA!
LORD LIU BEI, WHAT DID THE INSPECTOR SAY TO YOU?

W-WHAT?!
THERE'S A WEDDING BEING HELD OUTSIDE OF TOWN AND HE WANTED ME TO GIVE HIM THE BRIDE FOR A NIGHT.
LEAVE IT.
LET'S GO BEFORE ANYONE ELSE COMES.
I'LL KILL 'IM!
THAT SWINE! HE SAID THAT?!
BUT...
WHERE?

TAI
COMMANDERY
MOUNTAINS

LORD LIU BEI.
I KNOW I AM IN NO POSITION TO ASK, BUT LET US DEFINITELY RISE ABOVE THE CLOUDS ONE OF THESE DAYS.

YES, ONE OF THESE DAYS.
I TRULY DO HOPE WE CAN RISE ABOVE THEM.
THE RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS HAS STILL ONLY JUST BEGUN!

BAMBOO COMICS

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